

Bashir, rebels agree to start talks

NAIROBI (AP) — Sudan's military leader and the heads of two rival rebel factions have opened peace talks in separate meetings with a mediating committee of African presidents. President Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya said the rebels and the Sudanese government agreed to launch immediate talks in Nairobi on ending the civil war that began in 1983. An estimated one million people have been killed by war or famine since the fighting started. The United Nations says 1.7 million people in the region need emergency aid. The two rebel factions began fighting among themselves in 1991, adding more bloodshed to a conflict that has displaced millions in Africa's largest country. The mediating committee of Mr. Moi, President Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and a representative for President Issaias Afwerki of Eritrea met first with Omar Hassan Ali Bashir, Sudan's president, and then with rebel leaders John Garang and Riek Machar.

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Security Council condemns Hebron massacre

U.S. abstains on resolution's references to Fourth Geneva Convention and Jerusalem

Bilaterals to resume in April, high-level Israel-PLO talks soon, Washington announces

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — The Security Council Friday strongly condemned last month's massacre of dozens of Palestinians by an Israeli settler in the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron and called for a temporary international presence to ensure the protection of inhabitants of the Israeli-occupied territories.

The action immediately bore fruit: U.S. Ambassador Madeleine Albright told the Security Council Syria, Jordan and Lebanon have agreed to resume negotiations with Israel.

"First, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon have agreed to resume bilateral negotiations with Israel in April," she told the council.

Ms. Albright then announced that Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) had "finally agreed to convene a senior level meeting — the timing of which will be announced in the days ahead."

Ms. Albright made the statement during her speech to the Security Council after the 15-member body voted to condemn the massacre.

The resolution as a whole was adopted without a vote, after the United States in prior balloting on individual paragraphs abstained on two, including one affirming that Jerusalem is part of the Israeli-occupied territories.

Adoption of the resolution, after three weeks of bargaining and delays, was expected to help clear the way for the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to resume talks with Israel on implementing an accord they signed last September.

The resolution does not say what form the international presence should take, but it would not include an armed U.N. force, as called for by the PLO, since that would require Israel's consent.

The resolution also calls on Israel to take action to prevent "illegal acts of violence by Israeli settlers," including confiscating their weapons.

All eyes were on the United States to see whether President Clinton gave in to 82 U.S. senators demanding the United States veto the clause calling Jerusalem an occupied territory. In the end, Ambassador Albright raised her hand to abstain, not veto, on that clause.

In Washington, Secretary of State Warren Christopher said the decision by the three Arab governments to resume peace talks would provide "a strong impetus" to the PLO to get back to the bargaining table as well, and conclude arrangements with Israel for Palestinian self-rule in Jericho and Gaza.

Mr. Christopher said only that Israeli and PLO officials will meet "quite soon" to take up security measures on the West Bank and "the possible resumption of these negotiations at an early time."

President Clinton had urged the PLO and Israel to send negotiators to Washington to conclude arrangements for the self-rule agreement that was signed at the White House last September.

Mr. Christopher said he was not disappointed the PLO had not accepted the invitation, and that its preliminary talks with Israel would take place elsewhere.

"We think we have achieved a great deal to bring about the resumption of negotiations," he said.

Also, he said, the Clinton administration had "set in motion a mechanism that would bring the Palestinians and Israelis back to the table at an early time."

Mr. Christopher was referring to the Security Council resolution.

"If the sensitive language that prejudices matters had been in the operative clauses we would have voted it," Mr. Christopher said. "But since they are only in a preamble and since a procedure was developed on which we could abstain and express our disavowal of the language we felt we were consistent with our position."

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Following is the text of the U.N. Security Council resolution condemning the Hebron massacre:

The Security Council:

— Shocked by the appalling massacre committed against Palestinian worshippers in the mosque of Ibrahim in Hebron, on 25 February 1994, during the Holy month of Ramadan.

— Gravely concerned by the consequent Palestinian casualties in the occupied Palestinian territory as a result of the massacre, which underlines the need to provide protection and security for the Palestinian people,

— Determined to overcome the adverse impact of the massacre on the peace process currently underway,

— Noting with satisfaction the efforts undertaken to guarantee the smooth proceeding of the peace process and calling upon all concerned to continue their efforts to this end,

— Reaffirming its relevant resolutions, which affirmed the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 to the territories occupied by Israel in June 1967, including Jerusalem, and the Israeli responsibilities thereunder,

1. Strongly condemns the massacre in Hebron and its aftermath which took the lives of more than 50 Palestinian civilians and injured several hundred others;

2. Calls upon Israel, the occupying power, to continue to take and implement measures, including, inter alia, confiscation of arms, with the aim of preventing illegal acts of violence by Israeli settlers;

3. Calls for measures to be taken to guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians throughout the occupied territory, including, inter alia, a temporary international or foreign presence, which was provided for in the declaration of principles, within the context of the ongoing peace process;

4. Reaffirms its support for the peace process currently underway, and calls for the implementation of the declaration of principles, signed by the government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, on 13 September 1993 in Washington, D.C., without delay;

5. Requests the co-sponsors of the peace process, the United States of America and the Russian Federation, to continue their efforts to invigorate the peace process, and to undertake the necessary support for the implementation of the above mentioned measures.

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Jordan sought joint Arab stand ahead of Security Council vote

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein Friday telephoned several Arab leaders to exchange views on the situation in the region and the latest developments in the Middle East peace process, stalled since Feb. 25 when dozens of Palestinians were massacred at the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said King Hussein called King Hassan II of Morocco and discussed with him regional, Arab and international issues, with special emphasis on the peace process.

The King also called Syrian President Hafez Al Assad and reviewed with him the latest developments in the peace process.

The two leaders underlined the importance of coordination among Arab states in order to unify their ranks and stands in support of the Palestinian people.

King Hussein also called Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and reviewed with him the situation in the region.

The two leaders emphasised the importance of coordination among Arab countries, particularly those participating in the peace process, Petra said.

Clinton contacts King

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein Friday evening received a telephone call from U.S. President Bill Clinton. King Hussein and Mr. Clinton exchanged views on regional and international issues and the Middle East peace process.

The King also contacted Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and exchanged views with him on the latest developments in the peace process after the suspension of talks following the Hebron massacre.

In New York, Jordan's permanent envoy to the U.N. Adnan Abu Odeh said the King's contacts were aimed at arriving at a unified position on the issue of Jerusalem.

Mr. Abu Odeh said if the U.S. maintained its insistence on voting on a U.N. Security Council resolution paragraph by paragraph on Friday, this would signal a change in its stand on the Jerusalem issue.

Referring to the U.S. opposition to voting on the draft resolution as a whole because it refers to Jerusalem as part of the Israeli-occupied territories in one of its paragraphs, Mr. Abu Odeh said the Jordanian mission to the U.N. was alarmed by this and immediately contacted the government in Amman.

"As I have learned, His Majesty took the initiative and called several Arab leaders on the issue during the past 24 hours with the aim of establishing a unified and serious Arab stand to face this probable and serious change since the issue of Jerusalem is not only a Palestinian affair, but the affair of every Arab and Muslim," Mr. Abu Odeh said.

He added that resolving the question of Jerusalem in accordance with international legitimacy will be the cornerstone in the establishment of a permanent peace in the Middle East.

He expressed hope that the U.S. would change its position before voting on the resolution and take it as a whole, including the paragraph referring to Jerusalem as part of the occupied territories.

(Continued on page 5)

Israel, SLA block Lebanese road

NABATYEH (AP) — Israeli troops and their Lebanese allies Friday blocked the road to a village bordering an Israeli-held enclave in South Lebanon, security sources said. The road was used by guerrillas of Hizbollah to infiltrate the enclave, according to the sources. An Israeli contingent of the South Lebanon Army (SLA) set up a stone barricade and a three-metre-high earthen mound to bar motor traffic in and out of Yohmor, the sources said. Yohmor sits on the edge of the strip Israel maintains as a "security zone."

Turkey sends 150,000 troops to southeast

ANKARA (R) — Turkey has sent 150,000 more troops to the mainly Kurdish southeast before next week's Nowruz (new year) festival and municipal elections, officials said on Monday. It already has 180,000 soldiers, police and village guards in the area to fight Kurdish guerrillas seeking an independent state. Interior Minister Nihat Metase told Anatolian news agency that the 150,000 troops would help keep order during Nowruz, celebrated by Kurds, Iranians and other people in the region on Monday, and the elections being held across Turkey on March 27. Metase said earlier this month that an extra 50,000 policemen would also be sent.

Morocco bans mass march

RABAT (R) — The Moroccan authorities have banned a mass protest march planned for Sunday by 23 opposition parties, trade unions and rights groups, the independent Moroccan Organisation of Human Rights (OMDH) said on Friday. The march through the streets of Rabat was planned as a protest against violence against Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories and against Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina. An OMDH spokesman said it had been banned for security reasons, apparently because police forces would be mobilised on Saturday for an allegiance ceremony in honour of King Hassan at Rabat's royal palace.

Israel and PLO continue contacts

Rabin may move Hebron settlers

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Trying to get Palestinians back to peace talks, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin telephoned Yasser Arafat Friday and spoke of ways to resume negotiations, Israel Radio said.

There were no reported details of the 15-minute conversation and neither Israeli nor Palestinian officials could be reached for comment.

But the Israeli premier is reportedly considering moving the Jewish settlers in Hebron, the West Bank city of the mosque massacre, into one enclave as a compromise with Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) demands for removing the 450 settlers from the large Arab city.

The contacts between Mr. Rabin and Mr. Arafat came as officials worked Friday to arrange a meeting between Mr. Arafat and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

An Arafat-Peres meeting would be the first such high-level meeting since talks were severed after the Feb. 25 Hebron mosque massacre when a Jewish settler gunned down dozens of Palestinian worshippers in the Ibrahim Mosque.

PLO official Samir Ghoshe said Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres might meet Sunday in Cairo, Egypt, but the PLO was waiting to see if the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution Friday condemning the massacre. Speaking in Tunis, Tunisia, he said Mr. Arafat would not meet Mr. Peres unless the U.N. resolution is passed.

In Tunis, PLO officials said Mr. Arafat had authorised Faisal Hussein, a leading PLO activist in the West Bank, to hold talks with Mr. Peres on a possible compromise that could get the peace talks going again.

One official said Mr. Hussein was to meet with Mr. Peres Friday. He said Mr. Hussein was in Jerusalem, but would not say where the meeting was to take place.

PLO Executive Committee member Yasser Abed Rabbo said Mr. Arafat had no plans to meet Mr. Peres on Sunday.

"There is no plan for a meeting between PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Mr. Peres in Cairo. The main thing for us is

to see the implementation of the Security Council resolution and complete measures by the Israeli government on the ground," he said.

Mr. Abed Rabbo confirmed that U.S. coordinator Dennis Ross, in a telephone call on Thursday to Mr. Arafat, proposed such a meeting between Mr. Peres and the PLO.

Mr. Abed Rabbo said the PLO demanded that the Israeli government evacuate "settlers from Hebron and other settlements and the immediate presence of international force in the occupied Palestinian territories."

"The presence of this force requires forbidding the settlers from carrying their arms in the territories," he added.

The PLO ambassador to Egypt said earlier on Friday the Arafat-Peres meeting could not take place in Cairo on Sunday because President Hosni Mubarak would be in Zimbabwe for an Organisation of African Unity meeting.



An armed Jewish settler passes Palestinians in the occupied West Bank town of Hebron, under curfew since the Feb. 25 massacre of dozens of Palestinians by a Jewish settler in the town's Ibrahim Mosque (AFP photo)

Security Council split on Iraq

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — A Security Council split on Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. No council member advocated dropping the sanctions during the review, officials said. But some delegations, including council president France and some non-aligned nations, want to acknowledge Iraqi compliance with the weapons inspection programme.

The United States and Britain find themselves increasingly isolated in resisting any statements that could be seen as praising Iraq, for its significant compliance with ceasefire terms.

Discussions on the matter came a day after the 15-nation council decided Wednesday to maintain the devastating trade embargo on Iraq imposed for its invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

No council member advocated dropping the sanctions during the review, officials said. But some delegations, including council president France and some non-aligned nations, want to acknowledge Iraqi compliance with the weapons inspection programme.

These nations want the council to give Iraq an incentive by acknowledging its progress in fulfilling some of the ceasefire terms. Iraq, oil-rich but cash-poor, says it has little incentive to keep cooperating without such a pat on the back.

The division affected the five permanent members of the council with France, Russia and China advocating a change and the United States and Britain resisting it.

"There was no consensus on the formula," said council President Jean-Bernard Merimee, France's ambassador. Discussions will continue tomorrow and "hopefully there will be a consensus," he said.

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Muslim officials limit entry to Aqsa

Jerusalem's Old City. 2 killed in Gaza

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Islamic authorities have decided to bar non-Muslims from the Al Aqsa Mosque following the Hebron mosque massacre, officials said on Friday.

Muslim custodians of Islam's third holiest shrine said the decision was taken by the Waqf, or Islamic trust, in response to the Israeli police restriction of the entry of Muslims to the mosque.

"As long as Muslims are not allowed to enter their mosques freely, it is better that no one has that liberty at all," said Adnan Al Hussein, head of the Waqf department.

"People are complaining of the security measures at the gates of the mosque and once these measures change, we will change our decision," he told Reuters.

Fearing violence after a Jewish settler massacred dozens of Muslims kneeling in prayer at Hebron's Al Ibrahim Mosque three weeks ago, Israel police prevented Muslims from around the occupied territories from attending Friday prayers during the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Israel police confirmed that foreign tourists were being kept out of the mosque since the massacre.

But a police spokeswoman said the restriction was ordered by police for "operational reasons."

The 1,300-year-old mosque is a major tourist attraction in Jerusalem's Old City.

Two Palestinians were killed during an alleged shootout with soldiers in the Gaza Strip and at least 14 Palestinians were wounded in clashes that spread throughout the occupied territories Thursday.

On the coastal road in the Gaza Strip town of Khan Yunis, a Palestinian reportedly opened fire from his car at a passing Israeli patrol. The soldiers fired back, killing the man and an Arab passenger.

An Israeli officer was slightly wounded in the incident, the army said.

They said the slain man, Mohammad Shahwan, was a member of Hamas and was wanted for attacking Israelis and suspected Palestinian informants.

The passenger in Shahwan's car was identified as Taha Abu Samir. Both were 27 and from the village of Bani Suhaila, Palestinian reporters said.

Clashes broke out later in Khan Yunis and the Jabalya refugee camp between snatching Palestinians and soldiers. At least seven Palestinians were shot and wounded, residents and Arab reporters said. One of the wounded was shot in the chest and transferred in serious condition to a hospital in Israel, they said.

Similar confrontations took place in other parts of the Gaza Strip.

(Continued on page 3)

Bosnian Muslims, Croats sign landmark federation

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — Bosnia's Muslims and Croats put aside bitter memories of war on Friday and signed a document creating a federation for their battle-scarred land.

In a White House ceremony presided over by President Bill Clinton, Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic of Bosnia and Kresimir Zuback, representing Bosnian Croats, signed the constitution outlining the new federation.

Then President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia and Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic signed a document linking the federation with Croatia.

"The agreements signed today offer one of the first clear signals that parties to this conflict are willing to end the violence and begin a process of reconstruction," said Mr. Clinton.

He promised the United States would aid the rebuilding of Bosnia, but did not cite a specific figure.

"This is a great day for Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also for all those who are opposed to war," said Mr. Izetbegovic. The proposed federation would have a strong central government with power over defence, foreign affairs and economic matters. But it also would be divided into cantons, each of which would have a president and legislature and its own court system.

Strong federation ties with neighbouring Croatia would allow both nations to better negotiate with the Serbs, who have been major combatants in both the 23-month-old Bosnian civil war and the 1991 Croatian war.

Mr. Tudjman, the Croatian president, called the accord "a crucial turning point in the crisis," but warned that Bosnia needed substantial outside aid to repair the devastation of war.

The documents create an immediate federation among Muslims and Croats on the approximately 30 per cent of Bosnia not occupied by Serbs in the brutal civil war that has raged on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

They also include the principles of a confederation between Muslim-Croat Bosnia and neighbouring Croatia.

Mr. Clinton said this agreement could not ensure full peace throughout the region so long as the Bosnian Serbs, by far the most powerful military group, are not included. But he said he hoped it would prove the first major step towards peace. Adding: "It is the hope of all present today that the Serbs will join in this process as well."

Major tours Bosnia

British Prime Minister John Major toured Bosnia on Friday

Rabin, Clinton reviewed resumption of Mideast peace talks, not modalities

WASHINGTON (USIA) — Following is the official White House transcript of a background briefing given by senior administration officials Wednesday, discussing that day's meeting between President Bill Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Senior administration official: Let me just give a kind of brief overview of what went on today, and then my colleague and I can take a few questions.

The president and the prime minister discussed a range of different issues. They covered all of the bilateral negotiating tracks, but there was a special focus that was put on the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and also on the Israeli-Syrian negotiations.

With regard to the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and overall process, there was a discussion about how you get things back on track not only with regard to the resumption of negotiations and the conclusion of the declaration of principles and its implementation, but also how you address the security environment and how you address some of the concerns that Palestinians have about security in the territories.

On the Israeli-Syrian track, there was a discussion — there was an agreement of the two that, as you may have heard in the prime minister's statement, that there's a window of opportunity, but the time is moving and time shouldn't be lost.

There was also an issue that the prime minister raised, which was really the Russian role in all of this and their relationship to us as part of the cosponsors and how that fits into our working together and coordinating to ensure that the process itself gets promoted.

Anything else?

Question: Could you elaborate a little bit on the measures that the president generally said ought to be done for Palestinian security, and when are you and maybe your colleague going back to Tunis?

Answer: On the second question, I can't give you an answer right now. Well, obviously, he's continuing with our intensive consultations frequently on the phone. Whether it makes sense to go back, we'll have to think a little bit more about where things are based on the discussions that we're having.

On the first part, there were a number of ideas — and I know this is going to surprise you — that I don't want to get into. There was a recognition that something has to be done about the security environment, a recognition that Palestinians do need to feel secure. One of the things that you heard the prime minister say is that Israel understands it has an obligation to ensure law and order in the territories, and that that has to be applied to everyone who is in the territories, the Palestinians and Israelis alike.

They are considering a variety of ideas to address the security question, and I must say that there was not a particular focus on any one. But there was a consideration of a variety of steps that they need to take and that they themselves are still in the process of finalising those. But they're doing it with some dispatch. And what came through very clearly was a real

— again, a sense of not only urgency that it's important to do these things, but it was also a sense that from an Israeli standpoint, doing these things don't simply respond to what the Palestinians feel that they need for security, they also respond to problems that the Israelis themselves see.

And I have the sense — I must say that after being in Tunis on Monday where I felt that we began to see a narrowing of the gaps on the substance, today's discussions also lend in my mind a further manifestation that the Israelis are quite serious about taking certain concrete measures on the ground. And I think that will help in this process.

Q: Can I follow it up just quickly — you said it wasn't a focus. That means a special emphasis. It's got to be one of the other. Either the United States did not specify things that they thought the Israelis could consider — ought to consider, or the U.S. did, so did the president speak to Rabin of specific measures that he thought maybe Rabin ought to at least look at, or did he just speak in general terms that there have to be new security measures?

A: Let me make one comment and then my colleague will comment. Obviously, in the course of the discussions that we have had over the last 10 days or so, a variety of ideas have come up. In our discussions with both sides, on the kinds of things that might well contribute to changing the environment, reassuring Palestinians, and frankly, Israelis alike, on how to deal with the security environment. When I say that we didn't focus, the president didn't focus on any particular one, that's because there were a number of different kinds of measures that were discussed.

Do you want to add?

Second official: Just to make a general point, which is that the president has said before that he's not in the business of second-guessing the Israelis about how they take care of the security situation. He's very concerned that they address the issue and so, there was a discussion about the various things that could be done. But the notion that the United States is pressing Israel to do a particular thing is not an accurate characterisation of the way that the discussion went.

I think it's very clear that, and various U.S. government spokesmen have made clear since the Hebron massacre, that we welcome the measures that the Israeli government announced, but we wanted to see prompt and effective implementation. What we heard from the prime minister in private and what I think he also said in public was that he is determined to go ahead and implement those decisions and is also looking at other things. And there was a discussion about those other things.

But I think there was a clear indication from him of his determination to go ahead. The constraint that he felt was referred to publicly, which is similar to what he said privately, about the problem that Israel is a democracy and it has laws and there are some things which he can decide on that the courts can overturn.

Q: Do you have any indications or feelers from Syria that it intends to return to the bargaining table?

A: Well, I can tell you that when the Syrians and the

others departed, they made it very clear to the — and they announced it themselves — that this was a pause from their standpoint, not a break in negotiations. We will be going back to the Syrians at some point, and we will talk to them about what we think is the right time to resume those negotiations. And, at this point, we have every indication from them that they are quite serious about resuming, but we, at this point, have not really gone through and had a discussion on precise timing.

Q: Has the U.S. been asked whether it would be willing to participate on the ground in this temporary force, international or foreign force? And also, has the United States government even considered putting U.S. troops or civilians on the ground?

A: Well, again, what is in the declaration of principles is a temporary international or foreign presence — presence, I underscore the word presence. There have been, from time to time, questions about who might participate. And there have also been a number of countries that have come to us and suggested that they might be willing to participate. What we have said throughout is that in the declaration of principles it's very clearly stated that the temporary international or foreign presence has to be agreed upon. Obviously, it is up to the Israelis and Palestinians to determine the nature of this presence — its purpose, its role, its location. And that really has to be the first order of business.

Q: How significant is the prime minister's suggestion of a Palestinian police force that would operate outside of Gaza-Jericho framework?

A: Well, I think that it is, I think, noteworthy that he referred to the Palestinian police who used to operate in the areas outside of Gaza-Jericho. Obviously, they operated throughout, but he drew a distinction because in Gaza-Jericho, once you have an agreement, you're going to have a Palestinian authority. And the police that will be there will be under the Palestinian authority. In the rest of the territories there will be a negotiation to develop an agreement for the interim period. The fact is, until that takes place, his discussion of Palestinian police, who would be welcome, is one that is put in the context of them being in the rest of the territories but under an authority that is still basically the military government and the administration.

Q: Do you think the Palestinians will go for that?

A: I think there are — as well as many other issues are being resolved by direct discussions between them. And I would just say that it's very clear to us, based on the discussions that we've had this week and it's clear from the ones we've had today — that the Israelis are considering a series of meaningful measures designed to deal with the security environment.

Q: In connection with the PLO and Arafat, when will be the next point of contact with the PLO? Will the president call Arafat himself? And is it correct that Arafat did appeal to the president directly to rescue the talks?

A: Let me answer the first part by saying the contacts are almost continuous. We are — I can say I am on the phone with him quite a lot. And so we — it's not a case of having any kind of break in contacts.

We're in contact with him at sort of this level on a very regular basis. And, in fact, the secretary has also been in fairly regular communication with Arafat as well. We will be — I have no doubt we'll be following up again in part, to get a Norm's question, we'll want to brief him on what it is we've heard today. And I think I'll leave it at that.

Q: The president talked today about — he said that he and Mr. Rabin talked about how the United States might maintain an enhanced Israel security. Can you provide us some specifics about how we might do that?

A: I think that the discussions today — you notice from the prime minister's last paragraph, he said that he didn't come here with a shopping list, he came here with only one thing on his mind, which was the peace process. But as the president said in his statement, we have said from the beginning — the president has said from the beginning, that as Israel took risks for peace, he saw the U.S. role as minimising those risks. I think what he indicated in his statement today is that we're now moving from the general concept of minimising risks to discussing how to defray the costs of peace. And that is a process that has only just begun. I know you want immediate details of how much money this is going to cost the American taxpayer — we are well away from that kind of discussion yet. But there is a general recognition that defraying the costs of peace is going to be important if a peace treaty between Israel and Syria, Israel and Lebanon, Israel and Jordan is to be achieved this year, which was the timetable the prime minister put out today.

Q: The issue of concrete measures that the president mentioned at the press conference today, I'm a little unclear as to whether it's understood by the U.S. and the Israelis that these are items needed by the Palestinians in order to bring them back to the table or things that will be on the table and discussed once they come back. Can you just talk about the time frame and how it's connected?

A: It is clear that many of these measures that the Israelis are considering, as I said, are in part driven by an Israeli recognition that it's in Israel's interest also to effect that security environment. And I have little doubt some steps which we've already seen — saw an decision on Sunday to arrest and hold for a while Rabbi Levenger and others.

The Israelis are taking certain steps that are consistent with what the original Cabinet decision was, number one. Many of these concrete measures are measures that they want to talk to the Palestinians about. Obviously, they have had their own contacts with the Palestinians. And it's in that context that I think some of these measures may well be discussed.

Q: When you say that Syria sees this as a pause and not a break in the negotiations, what is it they tell you they're waiting for to happen before they resume?

A: First of all, we have to invite them back. It's not —

Q: Well, I thought invitations had been extended and —

A: No, it has not. No, it has not. It has not. There was a pause, and we had not set a new date for those negotiations

to resume. We will have undoubtedly some consultations with them before we make such a decision, but we have made no such decision, and we have issued no such invitation. So it's not a case of them deciding, it's a case of us, as the cosponsor, working with the Russians and deciding on what the time will be.

Q: It is fair to understand what Prime Minister Rabin has done so far as far as he can go and that the Palestinians have to come back, and there's nothing more they will get from Prime Minister Rabin? Is that a fair characterisation of what's happening now?

A: I would suggest that the Israelis have taken a number of decisions — some of the decisions themselves are still in the process of being implemented. It is also clear based on our discussions that the Israelis have a number of other additional ideas in mind on how to deal with the security environment. And those ideas are best — are most likely to be sorted out and then implemented. I think, once discussions with the Palestinians take place, whether those discussions will be part of the formal resumption of negotiations, whether they will be part of the contacts that have been on-going now, it's hard to say. I think you may get a combination of both.

Second official: Let me just add one thing on that. The prime minister expressed his concern that if he were to continue to take measures like this without a commitment to resumption of negotiations, that these would be pocketed and dismissed as not enough, and then more concessions would be demanded, and there would be no end to this process. So I think that the logic of the Israeli situation as expressed to us was one in which a commitment to return to the negotiations on the part of the PLO would find the Israelis more forthcoming than a refusal to commit to a return to negotiations.

Q: So there was no pressure here to make concessions?

A: There was not a pressure to make concessions. There was a good discussion on the issue of the importance of the security environment, and the importance of concrete measures.

Q: If I could just go back to Syrians for just a second. Were you saying that once you — all you have to do is set a date, and the Syrians will come back to the negotiating table?

A: What I'm saying is we haven't yet invited the other parties to come back, that we will have consultations with them. Obviously, we are also going to have to brief the Syrians in the aftermath of today's meeting just as the Palestinians will be briefed. If you read the prime minister's statement, there are things in there that obviously should be of great interest to the Syrians. I have little doubt that they will want to hear from us on what it was that was discussed by the president and the prime minister on the Israeli-Syrian track. And after we've had a chance to brief them and ourselves, think a little bit more about the nature of the process, then we'll make a judgement as to the right time to resume the negotiations on the other tracks.

Q: Are you expecting them to come back?

A: Well, when they announced themselves publicly that this is a pause, not a break, and they look forward to resumption of the negotiations, I think the answer is absolutely.

Israel preparing to quit Gaza

OCCUPIED GAZA (R) — The Israeli army is dismantling parts of military bases in the occupied Gaza Strip ready to pull out April 13 deadline to meet out, despite suspension of peace talks after the Hebron mosque massacre.

Palestinians and Israelis said on Friday that troops had accelerated the dismantling of permanent structures in the bases in areas slated to come under limited Palestinian self-rule according to the peace accord signed last September.

Some facilities had already been completely evacuated, they said.

Palestinian witnesses said they saw soldiers dismantle at least two military outposts in Gaza City and in the southern town of Rafah over the past few days.

"They are taking down observation towers and moving out mobile homes from some

of the biggest military bases in Gaza City," said one witness.

A senior Arab official in the Israeli civil administration said authorities had already set up alternative offices near the Erez crossing point to Israel and installed computer networks and communications facilities.

The official said some employees were scheduled to start work from the new offices on Sunday.

"Israel is speeding up the evacuation of its governing bodies from the Gaza Strip," he said.

The Israeli army had been slowly dismantling certain military installations and preparing alternative locations for soldiers and its civilian employees since the signing of the peace deal in September.

But Israeli security sources confirmed that preparations were under way to meet an

April 13 deadline for withdrawal — should the government order the army to do so.

"The moves are to make it easier for the redeployment (of forces) as quickly as possible. We are moving unessential equipment," one source said.

He said the moves had not affected the army deployment in the Gaza Strip. Troops whose quarters had been dismantled, for instance, were now housed in tents.

"The (Israeli army) reassess (its) deployment from time to time and this is normal within the internal redeployment within the Gaza Strip," one military official said.

Under the peace deal signed at the White House in September, Israel must withdraw from the occupied Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho by April 13.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Israeli-armed' bomb found in Bangkok

BANGKOK (AP) — Police on Thursday discovered a huge bomb in a truck they had towed to their station last week after it was involved in a traffic accident near the Israeli embassy, a police investigator said. A body also was found in the water tank containing the bomb, police said. They suspect it is the Thai driver who was hired along with the rented truck. The bomb was believed capable of destroying an area of up to one square kilometre, investigator Jirapong Jitthampong said. He said it was made of C4 plastic explosive planted in a tank of ammonium nitrate. He said initial investigations suggested the target was the Israeli embassy, located in a heavily fortified compound in a downtown tourist area of Bangkok. Police said a man described as having Middle Eastern looks had rented the truck on which the bomb was found. The device was disarmed by police at a public park across from the police station. The truck with the bomb had been parked at the station since police towed it there last Friday.

Kurdish deputies ordered prosecuted

ANKARA (AP) — A state security court Thursday ordered the prosecution of seven Kurdish deputies who were stripped of their immunity by parliament on charges of Kurdish separatism. The court ordered them to jail pending trial. They have been in police custody for interrogation for the past two weeks. No trial date was set. They could risk the death penalty if convicted. Six of the deputies are from the pro-Kurdish Democracy Party and include its chairman, Hatip Dicle. Chief Prosecutor Nusret Demirel told reporters that Mr. Dicle refused to testify throughout his interrogation. The party is believed to have close ties with the 'Kurdish Labour Party' (PKK), which has been fighting for autonomy in southeastern Turkey since 1984. Parliament acted against the Kurdish deputies after the PKK killed five military students in Istanbul last month and Mr. Dicle refused to condemn it, saying "military people are natural targets under war conditions." The Kurdish violence has left 12,000 people dead over the past decade.

EU sends aid to displaced Sudanese

BRUSSELS (AP) — A day after slapping an arms embargo on Sudan, the European Union (EU) on Thursday released \$500,000 to help people forced to flee their homes in the country's civil war. The EU's Executive Commission said the aid, including food, medicine and sanitary equipment, will go for nearly 50,000 people displaced from the southern city of Maridi by fighting between the Sudanese army and the opposition Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The EU imposed an arms embargo on Sudan on Wednesday. Officials described it as a political signal, saying that no arms have been shipped for several years. Most capitals froze trade with Sudan in 1989, when Lieutenant-General Omar Hassan Al Bashir came to power and installed an Islamic government. Egypt and Western nations accuse Sudan of harbouring and arming Iran-backed extremists. The United States lists Sudan among countries sponsoring "terrorism." The EU last month demanded that the government in Khartoum accept a ceasefire, saying that the bombing of SPLA territory hinders humanitarian aid. The aid is the first to Sudan under a three-year-old agreement between the EU and 69 developing countries.

Operator stops holidays to Israel, Egypt

COPENHAGEN (AP) — The largest Danish tour operator offering holidays in the Middle East has cancelled this year's trips to Israel and Egypt because of tension in the region. Tjæreborg cancelled April trips to Tel Aviv, which would have been the first Israeli destination since the mid-1980s. Tjæreborg had expected 3,000 customers for the spring and summer Israel trips, but cancelled them Wednesday after a month of no sales. Managing Director Hans Peter Andersen said Thursday that tourists were frightened after news reports about a Jewish settler killing people Feb. 25 in a mosque in the Israeli-occupied West Bank town of Hebron. "We stopped our tours to Egypt because we considered it too dangerous as fundamentalists continually threaten to attack tourists," said Mr. Andersen. Two other main Danish tour operators flying to Israel have not altered their plans.

Executed Egyptian tells family to rejoice

CAIRO (R) — One of the Egyptian officers executed for trying to assassinate President Hosni Mubarak told his family to rejoice at his execution because he was certain he was on his way to paradise.

The officer, First Lieutenant Medhat Al Tahawi, in a last will and testament released by the militant group the Gamaa Al Islamiya on Friday, said they should follow the example of the mother of Lieutenant Khaled al Islambouli, one of the men who assassinated President Anwar Sadat in 1981.

"She rejoiced when she heard the news of her son's execution. She gave out sweets and said she prayed to God that his brother Mohammed could have been executed before him," Al Tahawi's testament said.

It was not possible to authenticate the document, which the Gamaa sent by fax to an international news agency.

Al Tahawi and another officer were executed by firing squad in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria on Wednesday.

On Feb. 18 a military court in the northwestern town of Sidi Barrani found them guilty of planting explosives around an airbase which President Mubarak occasionally visits.

A militant arrested in Cairo gave the conspiracy away and the officers were arrested before Mr. Mubarak came.

Al Tahawi's testament gave no details of the assassination plans but, in a passage apparently referring to Mr. Mubarak, it tried to justify political assassination.

"Yes, father," it said, "he has killed innocents, detained good Muslims, tortured them in the worst possible way, violated their honour and destroyed Iraq and he will destroy Libya."

"He has destroyed Somalia and is taking part in the vilest conspiracy against this religion. Islam has nothing to do with him. Father, for he is an infidel as clear as the sun."

"This malignant tree... had to be killed. Killing him, and rehelling against him, was a religious obligation."

"Best assured, your son is alive, living a life not like your life, but a life of another kind," Al Tahawi added.

The lieutenant said no one could choose when to die. "So he must choose a noble death which brings him close to God and which might help atone for his sins," he said.

"Until we meet again in God's paradise," he ended.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel 7711119

PROGRAMME TWO

17:30 Les Aventures De L'Espace
18:30 L'Ecole Des Fais
19:00 News in French
19:15 Ushuaia
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 Family Matters
21:00 Local Programme
22:00 News in English
22:30 Focus Film

PRAYER TIMES

06:25 Fajr
12:30 (Summer) Dhuhr
13:45 Dhuhr
15:00 Asr
17:49 Maghrib
19:06 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swifeth, Tel. 811741
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 62785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 627441
De la Salle Church Tel. 617257
Terrasanta Church Tel. 622366

Church of the Annunciation Tel 627441

Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775201
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 624525
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624525
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 641419
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 623824, 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 625691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

A depression will affect the Kingdom, thus temperatures will drop and rain will fall with winds becoming southerly moderate. In Amman, partly cloudy weather conditions will prevail with a chance of showers and winds becoming southerly moderate and seas rough.

Min./Max. Temp.

AMMAN

Agaba 9/17
Deserts 13/26
Jordan Valley 6/20
Jordan Valley 12/23

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN: Dr. Hanna Manour 751197
Dr. Nidal Asad 751672
Dr. Raed Abu Zama 894295
Dr. Arafat Asabbah 802607
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asena pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 626772
Al Salam pharmacy 624445
Yaacoub pharmacy 624445
Shmeccani pharmacy 637660
Najm pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Muhammad Hala (—)
Al Oudh Pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Khalil Abu Hussein 985100

Khalif pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Rescue 637041
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891223
Blood Bank 773121
Hospital Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 638321
Hotel Complaints 605801
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 677411
Amman Municipality 677111
Complaints 677111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 610232
Central Amman Telephone 623101
Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 771111
Radio Jordan 774111
Walet Authority 847102
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RI Flight Information 18-33200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 06-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN: Hussein Medical Centre 81381332
Khulid Maternity, J. Amn. 642416
Al Khulid Maternity, J. Amn. 642416
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Mishas, J. Amman 636141
Palestine, Shmeccani 661714
Shmeccani Hospital 669131
Al-Muhsini Hospital 843645
Al-Muhsini Hospital 667229
The Islamic, Abdali 6612757
Al-Ahli, Abdali 661666
Italian, Al-Muhajireen 771015
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 7711126
Army, Marfa 89161115
Queen Alia Hospital 6234959
Amal Hospital 674153

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)983650
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al-Hana Modern Hospital (09)989990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital (02)327555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)327275
Ibn Al-Nafes Hospital (02)347100

AMMAN:

Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:30 Jakarta, Singapore (RJ)
09:25 New Delhi (RJ)
09:25 Agaba (RJ)
11:30 Dhahran (RJ)
11:30 London (RJ)
12:05 Cairo (RJ)
12:45 Larnaca (RJ)
12:45 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
12:45 Jeddah (RJ)
12:45 Damascus (RJ)
21:30 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:15 Beirut (ME)
11:30 Paris, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:30 Paris, Brussels (RJ)
11:30 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:05 London (RJ)
12:45 Cairo (RJ)
12:45 Larnaca (RJ)
12:45 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
12:45 Jeddah (RJ)
12:45 Damascus (RJ)
21:30 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:20 Vienna (OA)
11:30 Rome (IY)
11:30 Rome (AZ)
18:45 Dubai (EM)
22:15 Paris, Damascus (AF)
23:15 Amsterdam (KL)
23:35 Cairo (MS)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:00 Beirut (RJ)
07:00 Agaba (RJ)
11:00 Paris, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:30 Paris, Brussels (RJ)
11:30 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:05 London (RJ)
12:45 Cairo (RJ)
12:45 Larnaca (RJ)
12:45 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
12:45 Jeddah (RJ)
12:45 Damascus (RJ)
21:30 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Talhouni to be eulogised

AMMAN (J.T.) — A eulogy ceremony will be held today (Saturday) to commemorate 40 days since the passing of Bahjat Talhouni, former prime minister and senior statesman. Speaking at the ceremony will be Upper House of Parliament Speaker Ahmed Lawzi, Lower House Speaker Taher Masri, Ahmad Tarawneh, Musa Abu Ragheb, Nassereddin Al Assad, Kamal Shaer and Tawfiq Kreshan, as well as Adnan Talhouni on behalf of the Talhouni family and Salah Abu Zeid as master of ceremony. The late Mr. Talhouni served as prime minister seven times in his political career. He died on January 30 at the age of 80. The ceremony will be held at the Palace of Culture at 5:00 p.m. and will be open to all citizens.

3 envoys present credentials

AMMAN (J.T.) — Three newly appointed ambassadors to Jordan are expected to present their credentials to His Majesty King Hussein soon. U.S. Ambassador Wesley William Egan, French Ambassador Bernard Bagot and South Korean Ambassador Oh Chung Il, Thursday presented their credentials to Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Talal Al Hassan in separate meetings at his office. Mr. Egan served as deputy chief of mission at the U.S. embassy in Cairo from 1990 through July 1993. Earlier in his career he had served as ambassador to the Republic of Guinea-Bissau. Born in Madison, Wisconsin in 1946, Mr. Egan received a degree in international studies from the University of Carolina in 1968 and later joined the foreign service. Mr. Bagot served at the French foreign ministry in Paris. The South Korean ambassador arrived in Amman earlier this month.

House to discuss municipalities draft law

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament will meet Saturday afternoon to discuss the municipalities draft law and an amendment to a law on insurance companies. The House will also hear replies by ministers to several deputies' queries and will refer deputies' proposals to its specialised committees. The House is also scheduled to debate a decision by its financial committee on the Jordanian exports guarantee corporation draft law.

Jordan to attend international parliamentary meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan will participate in the 91st Conference of the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) which will convene in Paris between March 20 and March 26. Jordan's delegation to the conference will be headed by Senator Ahmad Obeidat and will include as members deputies Mohammad Al Hajj, Mansour Ben Tarif and Toujan Faisal, in addition to Parliament Secretary General Saleh Al Zu'bi and the parliament's Public Relations Manager Fayez Al Shawab-kah.

Baccalaureate schools regional meeting to open

AMMAN (Petra) — A regional conference for the International Baccalaureate Schools in the Middle East and Africa Wednesday will open at the Amra Hotel. The four-day conference, which will be held under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath, will discuss values and cultures from an Arab and Islamic perspective. The issue will be tackled at four seminars and workshops which will also discuss the history and civilisation of the Islamic world, subjects taught at the Baccalaureate schools and coordination between them. Some 180 Baccalaureate School principals and curricula coordinators will participate in the conference. They will come from Jordan, Egypt, Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, Morocco, Libya, Turkey, Cyprus, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Britain, Switzerland, Austria, Scotland, China, India and the U.S.

QAIA closes Terminal 2 for repairs

AMMAN (Petra) — Queen Alia International Airport's (QAIA) Terminal Two will be closed for maintenance from today (Saturday) until April 25, Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) sources said Friday. The sources said the floor of the terminal will be replaced with locally-produced granite tiles by two Jordanian firms. They said departures during this period will be moved to Terminal One.

Renovations continue on Jerash antiquities

AMMAN (Petra) — The Antiquities Department has drawn a plan to continue maintenance and renovation works as well as excavations at the Greco-Roman city of Jerash. Director of the Jerash offices of the Antiquities Department Ibrahim Zu'bi said, Mr. Zu'bi said that in 1993, the department renovated and reconstructed shops overlooking the colonnade street and those adjacent to the gate of Temple of Artemis. He said the work was conducted in cooperation with the Italian Research and Antiquities Centre. The department has also discovered stone sculptures at the old temple which was destroyed twice in the first and second centuries, he said. The department's office in Jerash was also carrying out maintenance on important archaeological finds such as the mosaic floors which were uncovered in the eastern part of Jerash, formerly a residential area, Mr. Zu'bi said. He said the department has also discovered Roman cemeteries on the western side outside the walls of the city near Al Nasr area. In addition, Mr. Zu'bi said, the department renovated some rooms and the amphitheatre at the house-racing arena south of the city. During 1994, said Mr. Zu'bi, the department will renovate the Temple of Artemis and the arc over its gate in cooperation with the Italian government.

Ordeal of Indian farmworkers in 3rd month

By Suhair Obeidat
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Nearly 125 Indian farmworkers at odds with their employer in the Jordan Valley marked two months Friday of a crisis which found them spending almost the entire winter with whatever shelter they could find in the garden and garage of their country's diplomatic mission in Amman.

The crisis, kept under diplomatic wraps until now with hopes of an amicable settlement, is feared to mushroom and bring about negative repercussions on the traditionally cordial relationship between Jordan and India if Indian politicians get winds of the affair and manipulate it, observers say.

The workers are employed at the expansive farm of Mohammad Abdul Qader Shaheen in South Shoubeh. According to the workers, who are refusing to return to their employer until their demands for back pay and better working conditions are met, they are no nearer to solving their problem than they were when they fled their workplace and sought refuge at the Indian embassy two months ago.

They complain of "near slavery" working conditions and say that the employer is refusing to entertain any of their demands, which are: immediate settlement of past wages and benefits, better drinking water and accommodations and an improve-

ment in wages.

No comment was available from Mr. Shaheen. Repeated calls to the farm went unanswered.

The workers' version of the dispute is:

— Their wages are JD2.5 dinars for 10 hours of work per day. Part of the wages — an average of JD25 per month — is deducted by the employer to pay for their airfare to and from Jordan (JD600 every two years).

In addition, another JD75 is deducted annually to pay for their work and residence permits. Thus, the net daily wage is around less than JD1.5.

The workers say that they were not aware of such reductions when they accepted the job offers made through an employment agency based in New Delhi.

They have no proper employment contracts except those drawn up after they arrived here.

(Endorsement of employment contracts by the diplomatic mission in the country of employment is a prerequisite for the Indian immigration authorities before allowing workers to leave India. Apparently in the case of the Jordan Valley workers, that procedure was not followed.)

(As a rule, employers sign an undertaking to pay the airfare as well as the work and residence permits for their employees while they obtain Ministry of Interior permission to bring foreign

workers into the country).

Bad living conditions are another complaint of the workers. They say that they are given plastic houses, which can offer little protection against the difficult weather conditions in the Jordan Valley, and their drinking water comes from a muddy fish pond nearby. Most of the workers say they have severe stomach ailments because of polluted water they consume.

The employer holds back several months of pay from the workers so that he can pay for anyone's airfare home at the slightest resistance against the working conditions. Dozens have been deported over the past years when they demanded improvements, the workers say.

Now, the workers are afraid that if they go back to the employer he would use the back pay to buy them tickets and deport them without settling their dues.

— The workers have to work on the basis of daily wages, meaning seven days a week with no paid holiday.

The employer offers them two paid holidays every year during 'Eid Al Fitr and 'Eid Al Adha.

The workers first brought their grievances to the Indian embassy in late December. The embassy launched contacts with Mr. Shaheen while asking the workers to go back to the farm. The employer, according to the workers, did not refute the facts in the

case, but only undertook to the embassy that he would try to improve the quality of drinking water available to the workers.

On Jan. 18, the workers say, they fled the farm after the employer forced them to put their thumb impressions on a piece of paper, allegedly a collective employment contract.

They have not gone back since then, hoping that the embassy would be able to settle their problem.

After failing to secure the employer's agreement to the workers' demands, and in the face of the workers' refusal to return to him before their demands are met, the embassy took up the matter with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and through it, with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labour.

After several rounds of meetings involving ministry officials, embassy representatives and Mr. Shaheen, the real catch in the dispute emerged: Jordan's Labour Law is not applicable to the agriculture sector and, as such, there is little the government can do to help the workers.

The Ministry of Labour advised the workers to return to their place of employment, pending a ministry investigation of their working conditions and the facilities other employers in the Jordan Valley offer to their employees.

The workers have refused to accept the ministry recommendation, saying they had

no guarantee that the employer would not deport a few of them to intimidate the rest to accept his terms and conditions. They say that in February, 19 of their co-workers were deported upon Mr. Shaheen's request.

Instead, they have come up with a compromise:

— The employer settles their outstanding dues immediately. Some of the workers are owed up to eight months' pay.

— The employer, if he wants to retain them on his payroll, has to pay a minimum wage of JD2.5 per day and pay all expenses, including airfare and local work and residence permit charges on his own without taxing the workers.

— If the employer does not want to retain the workers, then he should repatriate them at his own expense as he is obliged to under the permission given to him by the Ministry of Interior.

— If the option of repatriation at his expense is unacceptable to the employer, then the employer should release the workers so that they can seek work at other farms in Jordan.

Judging from the results of the embassy's contacts with the employer and others, as relayed to the workers, none of the options is acceptable to the employer. In view of the non-applicability of the country's labour law to the agriculture sector, the government cannot help either. And hence the deadlock.

"A solution has to be found to our problem," said one of the workers. "We have families to feed."

"We have come here to work and earn a living, not to stage a strike or live in the courtyard of the embassy," said another.

That much was evident from one look at the three-metre-by-three-metre room where the 120 workers are temporarily sheltered. "We take shifts to sleep," explained one of them.

The direct dispute between the workers and their employer is only one side of the problem. Other concerns are how Indian opposition politicians will handle the issue once they hear of it.

Apparently, the Indian embassy here has tried its best to keep the problem from the media. But when the issue is exposed, the Indian government will come under pressure from opposition to act to protect the interests of the workers.

"Ironically, then the ball will fall back squarely into both courts — that of the embassy here and the Jordanian government — at the same time," said an observer.

"The question is: Does the Jordanian government, or the Indian government for that matter, want to jeopardise excellent relations just because one Jordanian employer is unwilling to listen to reason?"

Joint Jordan- Egypt high committee meets this week

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Joint Jordanian-Egyptian Higher Committee meets here this week for the first time since 1990 to streamline relations between the two countries following the healing of a strain caused by the Gulf crisis.

The meetings will be chaired by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and his Egyptian counterpart Atef Sedki and will include several members from the two cabinets.

Apart from political issues, the agenda for the meetings includes existing Jordanian-Egyptian projects and possibilities of future joint ventures.

Also determined during the meetings will be the volume of trade between Jordan and Egypt. In 1993, Egyptian exports to Jordan totalled JD 55 million while Jordan sold JD 5 million worth of its products to Egypt.

Egyptian Minister of Trade and Industry Mahmoud Awad visited Jordan last month and signed an agreement with his Jordanian counterpart Rima Khalaf on extending exemptions from customs duties for some of the products of each other.

The decision to resume regular meetings of the joint higher committee was taken during a visit to Amman in December of Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa.

It also followed an improvement of relations sealed by a summit meeting of His Majesty King Hussein and



Abdul Salam Majali

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in November.

The strain in Jordanian-Egyptian ties were caused by conflicting positions adopted during the Gulf crisis sparked by the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

The joint committee met last a few days before the invasion of Kuwait, and, in the ensuing strain in relations, many of its decisions remained unimplemented.

"There is full agenda for discussions, including some of the pending issues as well as new ideas and proposals which have emerged in view of the progress made in the Middle East peace process," said an official.

In addition to a regular flow of trade, Jordan and Egypt also set up joint projects, including a maritime transport company which operates the ferry route between Aqaba and Nuweibeh.

While the joint projects continued their functions without much hindrance, discussions on consolidating their activities and following up on a series of agreements



Atef Sedki

in tourism, exchange of expertise and technology etc. remained frozen.

One notable exception was the implementation of an agreement to link the power networks of the two countries and a broader accord involving Turkey, Iraq and Syria.

The main focus of talks that Mr. Musa had during his Amman visit in December was bilateral relations with particular attention on reviving the joint higher committee.

"The state of relations between Jordan and Egypt has been abnormal but now things have been put back on track," said an official, after Mr. Musa's visit.

There always was a minimum level of cooperation despite the unfortunate differences caused by the Gulf crisis, but that was not simply enough."

Among the issues on the table for the higher committee are also the situation of Egyptian workers in Jordan and the status of Jordanian students studying in Egyptian universities.

Minister denies reports of Jordan-Israel maritime plan

AMMAN (Petra) — Transport minister Atef Sedki Friday denied reports about a Jordanian-Israeli plan to launch maritime cooperation in the Gulf of Aqaba.

Reports in the Israeli media alleging that he made statements about such cooperation are totally groundless, said the minister upon his return from an international meeting on world transport held in Crete.

The Jordanian delegation to the Crete conference made no contact whatsoever with the Israeli delegation taking part in

that meeting and the Israeli media reports are baseless and have no truth in them, added Mr. Sedki.

The conference, held between March 14 and 17 discussed transport and transit issues and international routes, especially those leading to east and central European nations, according to Mr. Sedki.

The meeting, added the minister, set up three committees to help settle various issues and topics on the agenda.

The first committee discussed matters of security and

protection to personnel involved in transport; the second tackled issues related to the environment and infrastructure; and the third committee addressed cooperation in transport among the concerned nations.

He said that the conference statistics revealed that 50,000 people die and 200,000 others are injured annually as a result of transportation operations in Europe.

He said Arab European delegations took part in the meeting.

Meeting seeks alternative to ozone-depleting industrial materials

AMMAN (J.T.) — Delegates from Arab and foreign countries will meet in Amman on Tuesday for a three-day conference on the use of alternative industrial materials to gas-emitting substances considered harmful to the ozone layer, according to a statement by the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Friday.

Industries, including those in Jordan, have been using materials, especially in refrigeration and air conditioning processes, that cause further depletion of the ozone layer and contribute to global warming, said the ministry.

It said the 60 delegates to a meeting will also discuss international transportation of industrial materials and public safety precautions involved.

The statement said the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company (JPRC) is currently pro-

ducing substitutes to ozone-depleting materials and is supplying them to various Jordanian firms.

The JPRC has benefited from a \$1.8 million fund allocated for Jordan by the Montreal Protocol fund.

An international conference held in Thailand in November 1993 to discuss the implementation of the 1987 Montreal Protocol allocated \$510 million for a special fund to help countries reduce their industries' reliance on harmful materials between 1994 and 1996.

Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Ahmad Akaleh told a two-day seminar in Amman last December that a survey conducted on the industries using ozone-depleting materials showed that Jordan has been consuming 650 tonnes of such materials.

Electric fault sparks minor blaze at Saudi residence

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A fire broke out at the Saudi ambassador's residence in Um Uthaina district of Amman on Friday evening but caused no casualties, a Civil Defence Department (CDD) official said.

The official, Captain Abdul Raouf Maaytah, said the fire was sparked by a faulty circuit in an electric heater that was switched on by the Egyptian janitor of the diplomatic residence.

The sprawling villa has been vacant since late 1990, when Riyadh recalled its ambassador from Amman following a strain in relations caused by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The Egyptian janitor and a Sri Lankan maid live in the sprawling villa as caretakers, neighbours said. Capt. Maaytah said the Egyptian janitor during the short blaze in the living room, but recovered afterwards and was in a good condition. "It was a minor fire of the type that occurs in many households," said Capt. Maaytah, head of the CDD's public relations department. He said a television, a video recorder and the air conditioner were completely burnt out and there was no major damage.

Officials curb Al Aqsa entry

(Continued from page 1)

place in Nablus, the West Bank's largest town. Hospital officials said seven Palestinians were wounded.

Protests also erupted at two West Bank universities, Bir Zeit and Bethlehem, with soldiers firing tear-gas and rubber bullets to disperse students.

At Bir Zeit, a traditional hotbed of protest, about a thousand demonstrating students burned tyres, barricaded roads and stoned an army outpost to protest the killings.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Exhibition by artist Shawkat Al Rubai'y at the Orfali Art Gallery in Um Uthaina (Tel. 826932)
- ★ Book exhibition at the Safeway International.
- ★ "Permanent" exhibition of 54 Arab contemporary artists at Darat Al Fann of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation in Jabal Luweibdeh (Tel. 643251/2).

LECTURES

- ★ Lecture in Arabic entitled "The Crisis of Arab Resistance to Israel in the Wake of the Settlement" by Lebanese Sheikh Mohammad Hassan Al Amin at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation in Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.
- ★ Lecture in Arabic entitled "The Horizons of German-Arab Relations" by Dr. Abedisaid Abu Hantash at Goethe-Institut at 7:00 p.m.

SEMINAR

- ★ Seminar on the rights of Jordanian women and children based on two reports Jordan presented to the U.N. Human Rights Commission and Child Rights Commission. The seminar will be held at the Royal Cultural Centre at 6:30 p.m.

DRAMA

- ★ Drama in Arabic entitled "The Night of the Burial of an Artist" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

8-year-old found brutally killed

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — An eight-year-old boy from the northern town of Zarqa, reported missing since March 12, has been found brutally murdered after possible sexual assault, police and family sources said Friday.

The battered body of the boy, identified only as Ahmad M. A., was discovered four days after he was reported missing near Al Hashmiah area in Zarqa by a family who went picnicking on Wednesday, family sources said.

"The head of the boy and other parts were severed," a family member told the Jordan Times. "Police removed the body and returned it to the family after autopsy." The family buried the body Thursday.

While police would only confirm the discovery of the body and that the boy was

murdered, relatives said the boy appeared to have been sodomised before he was killed.

Another family member said there were some indications the boy could have been gang-raped and brutalised before he was killed.

"It is too early to predict anything," the source said. "But there is strong evidence that the boy was raped before he was killed."

A police source said the authorities were investigating the crime and declined further comments into the case. Ahmad, the only son of the family, was reported missing when he failed to return after playing with his friends near his house.

It was the second such incident reported in a one-year period. In June of 1993, a nine-year-old boy who was reported missing in Russefeh was also found brutally murdered with possible sexual assaults.

A 20-year-old cousin was later tried and convicted of the killing and was sentenced to death.

Convict executed

An Egyptian national convicted of first degree murder was hanged in Swaga prison early Thursday. It was the second execution in Jordan this year.

Police officials said Mohammad Ahmad Abdul Al Jawad Moharram, a farm worker, was found guilty of killing a 30-year-old Jordanian man in a dispute over a woman.

According to court papers, Moharram was in love with the daughter of his farmowner, but the father rejected his bid to marry her.

Moharram suspected that a cousin of the girl who wanted to marry her was behind the rejection of his suit and stabbed him to death, according to court papers.

Palestinian opposition grows

(Continued from page 10)

Strictly monitored road blocs and the threat of curfews continue to hang over the villages, towns and cities of the occupied territories.

Access to Jerusalem is still not possible for most Palestinians with West Bank identification papers. Special permits are only granted to a few.

"The people have lost hope somehow after this massacre, which has had an unprecedented impact on the population. I doubt that things will ever be the same again," said Jan Abu Shakra, who runs the Palestine Human Rights Information Centre (PHRIC) out of an office in East Jerusalem.

"There is a certain numbness in the atmosphere and, more importantly, a final loss of faith in the peace process," Mrs. Abu Shakra said. People were losing hope before the massacre because of the unwillingness of the Israelis to take concrete steps to end

the occupation, but now it is more than that. It seems certain that the peace process has failed."

Although Palestinian technical committees continue to meet at the National Palace Hotel and in the Orient House in Jerusalem to work on securing Palestinian sovereignty, the members of the committees are critical of the ongoing process.

"It is wrong for us to go back to the negotiating table now," said member of the Palestinian team to the multilateral environment talks Dr. Abdul Malik Al Jaber. "The Israelis have not changed their behaviour in the occupied territories. As far as we are concerned that's not good enough. Even if the U.S. and others pressure (the PLO) back to the table, it will be bound to fail again under these conditions. (Israel) has to prove to us that (it) is sincere and so far (it has) not done so."

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Smoke, no fire

THE BOMBHELL that the minister of health, Abdul Rahim Malhas, dropped last month about the state of food and medicine in the country rekindled awareness and concern about public safety. For a while there was considerable hope that at last the government would do something drastic about unfit food commodities and drugs that our people might have been consuming. The heated debate that followed led to the belief that solutions to these problems were in the pipeline. Since then, however, the storm triggered by Dr. Malhas' shocking disclosures on the food we eat and the drugs administered to the people, has all but died down without any sign of concrete action.

This is not to suggest that there has been a deliberate plan to brush the issue under the carpet. The real concern is rather centred on the fact that not much has been heard from either the sponsor of the complaint or the government about the follow-up procedures dealing with the subject. All available evidence points to the fact that the quality of the food the people consume and the medicines they use are just about the same. A crisis of the size and magnitude exposed so bravely by the minister cannot and should not be forgotten so quickly by either the government or the public.

The least that Jordanians expect is updated information about remedial measures to put public safety first. Dr. Malhas himself is dutybound to report to the nation about the corrective actions taken in the wake of his dramatic revelations last month. To cite one or two examples: Has anybody from the concerned authorities visited Jordanian farms to check the quality of Jordanian agricultural products, especially after several soundings of the alarms about the misuse of pesticides and insecticides? How about the quality of the air Jordanians breathe and water they drink?

Come to think of it, in spite of all the rhetorical campaigns to phase out black smoke billowing from motor vehicles, the streets of Amman are still full of carbon and sulphur oxides. No one can truly suggest that the number of automobiles polluting the capital and other Jordanian metropolises with diesel smoke has indeed gone down. We see such cars roaming the thoroughfares of the country with remarkable impunity every minute of the day. We have yet to see a traffic patrol issuing tickets to violators of the anti-pollution law in spite of the periodic noise that the concerned authorities make about their determination to root it out and the campaigns they started to do just that. Industrial pollution is also still on the rise even though the problem has been repeatedly highlighted by His Majesty King Hussein himself. All this means that the message about the dangers of contamination and pollution has yet to be absorbed by the national psyche, and until this is done we cannot expect more than random expression of anxiety and concern.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I daily predicts that the U.N. Security Council would extend the current embargo against Iraq for another three months because its members and the world community at large fall under the U.S. Zionist influence. None of the non-aligned or Islamic nations would lift a finger in defence of the Iraqi people who continually face suffering, hunger and deprivation because of the unjust resolution taken by the Security Council in August of 1990, said the paper. The United States has taken the decision to slaughter the Arab Nation's all available means, and the embargo on Iraq is but one phase of its plot against this nation, said the daily. The Iraqis have implemented all U.N. resolutions and still they continue to face injustice as the world watches Iraqi children, women and old people dying due to food and medicine shortages and as the Islamic World continues to help the United States and its allies to perpetuate the sanctions, continued the daily. While Washington condones Israel's time at the Hebron Mosque and refuses to condemn it, it is determined to pursue all ways for starving the Iraqis and forcing the smaller nations to follow suit, the paper said. It said that the United States, the strongest nation on earth, is setting an example of immoral and criminal attitude for smaller nations to follow.

JORDANIAN PERSPECTIVE

Time that government, deputies started soul-searching

By Dr. Musa Keilani

JORDAN'S 12th Parliament marks the end of its first regular term this week against a heated debate over prospects for an extension of the ordinary session and an extraordinary session.

Quite understandably, the government wants an extraordinary session while the deputies want an extension of the regular session. And the motivations behind the choices of the executive and legislative authorities are clear: The government does not want itself to be targeted for parliamentary criticism more than the inevitable level that it has to take during the regular sessions, while the elected representatives of the people would not like restrictions on their deliberations and would like to reassert their role as watchdogs of the moves of the executive authority.

The catch is simple: If the regular session of Parliament is extended, then the deputies are free to bring up any subject they choose to for discussion on the floor. On the other hand, the government could restrict the House to discussing specific laws and issues in an extraordinary session since the Constitution says that topics for debate during such a session are limited to those defined in the Royal Decree convening it. By the looks of things over the weekend, it was unlikely that the concerted campaign of some of the parliamentarians will succeed in securing an extended regular session. All indications were that an extraordinary session would be called shortly after the House concludes its regular term.

In the meantime, it would be a useful exercise for both sides to go on a soul-searching exercise to judge how far they have been successful in living up to the expectations of the people. In my opinion, the government of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali has managed to outlive all parliamentary manoeuvrings and has done a satisfactory job so far, given the extraordinary circumstances and conditions that characterise a budding democracy in a Third World country like Jordan. Indeed, some of those features were and are unique to Jordan, and we could hope to see more of the same as we go along. That is part and parcel of the experience.

The Majali government is unfortunate to have been saddled with several unpopular and controversial executive decisions, including the planned introduction of sales tax — which, despite concerted efforts by the government, continues to elude popular and parliamentary support — a draft law on the insurance sector, and other pieces of legislation.

At one point, it looked as if the so-called Malhasgate affair triggered by the startling allegations raised by Health Minister Abdul Rahim Malhas would bring down the Majali government if only because what it put up for public view was questions over public health and safety, an issue that has toppled many a strong cabinet elsewhere. The Majali govern-

ment not only survived that crisis but also managed to contain its fallout, much to the chagrin of many who were rubbing their knuckles in glee over the discomfort over the government when the issue went on the floor in the domed Parliament house.

If anything, the endorsement by the House last week of the draft law on standards and specifications was very telling of how deputies would behave when it comes to decisions that would make or break a government. Unlikely forces rallied behind the government to vote for the law with slight amendments.

"It is welcome news that Dr. Majali is contemplating a cabinet reshuffle to include some members of Parliament in the executive authority. This would be a very delicate task, given the nature of the structure of Parliamentary blocs as well as the postures of some of the independent members of the House."

Obviously the lessons that we, the electorate, have to learn is that moderate forces are gaining increased strength in Parliament despite the loud voices that we hear from some of the deputies who have not joined the leftist or Islamist camp despite being leftist or Islamist in thinking and ideology.

It is welcome news that Dr. Majali is contemplating a cabinet reshuffle to include some members of Parliament in the executive authority. This would be a very delicate task, given the nature of the structure of parliamentary blocs as well as the postures of some of the independent members of the House. Satisfying the demands of the blocs to the minimum level that assures him of sufficient parliamentary support is a very challenging task that confronts Dr. Majali. Any further comment on this would have to await the actual reshuffle, as when and if it takes place.

However, it would be very interesting to see how the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the single largest bloc in the House with 16 (plus two, if you will) votes, would respond if asked to join the government. The questions that such a hypothesis brings up are: Will the IAF uphold its ideological and political opposition to the peace process and turn down the offer, given

that there cannot be any retraction of the Jordanian move towards a negotiated settlement with Israel? Or will it decide not to waste an opportunity to reenter the executive authority and seek to work from within to bring about the fundamental and changes that it deems necessary to serve its ideological and political purposes?

At the same time, the unproclaimed split among "hawks" and "moderates" in the so-called Islamist bloc in Parliament cannot be overlooked either. Whether the prospect of joining the government will exacerbate that split or unite the bloc is another question that should be answered if indeed Dr. Majali invites it into the cabinet.

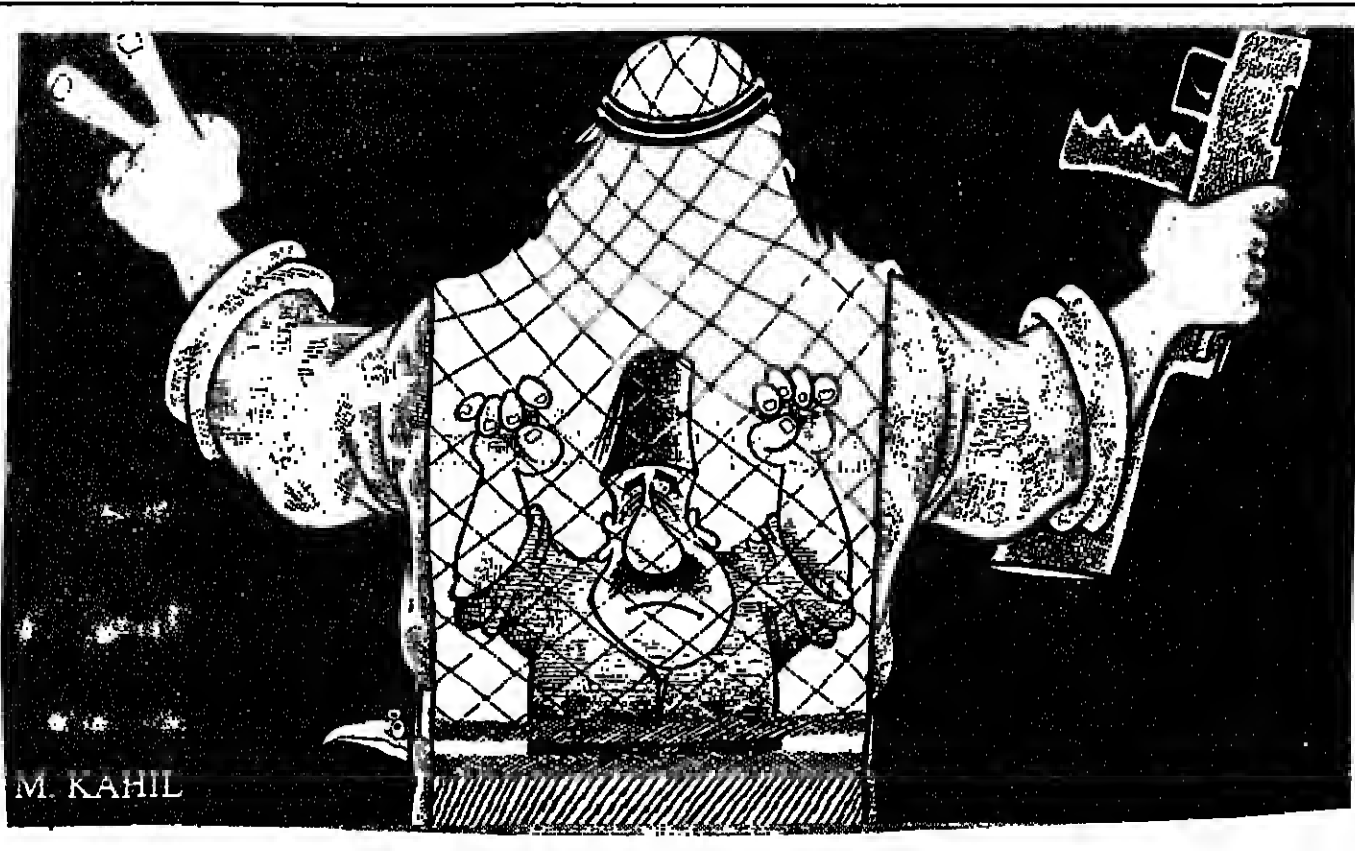
On the other hand, one could discern an emerging axis in Parliament among three key blocs with a combined voting strength of 36. The ideologies, if one chooses to use that term to describe their approaches, and positions of the three are not too different. If anything, they have an overwhelming combination of elements in common than any differences. Again, it should be interesting to see whether 36 deputies could come up with a satisfactory composition of cabinet seats that would ensure all their votes go behind the government.

When one puts the legislature's performance since November under the magnifying glass, the picture that emerges is not very colourful or impressive. Newspapers were not exaggerating when they headlined that personal dispute were preoccupying the work of the lawmakers to the extent that important pieces of legislation were being held up or not given the right magnitude of importance they deserved during the House debates.

The state of affairs in the House reached such a point that it forced His Majesty King Hussein to remind the lawmakers that they were veering away from their rightful responsibilities and obligations and overlooking many crucial issues.

Interestingly, the King's words have had a jolting effect on the country. Suddenly we found government-run media chiefs coming up with excuses that they were unable to do a fair and responsible job without administrative and financial independence, companies announcing multi-million dollar projects to fight pollution, and journalists and concerned departments trying to address the problem of drug addicts.

Such a response to the King's pointed observations underlined the very shortcomings of our lawmakers since they entered Parliament in November. Hopefully, they have learned their lessons in the past five months and we could expect an upgraded, pointed and non-nonsense behaviour from them soon. That is the least they could do to live up to the expectations that the voters attached to their ballot papers on Nov. 8.



THE WEEK IN PRINT

Peace talks are futile under current formula; continued sanctions on Iraq proof of U.S. bias

Reviewed by Elia Nasrallah

QUESTIONS RELATED to the resumption of the Middle East peace process in light of the Israeli crimes against the Palestinians as well as the repercussions of the Hebron massacre and domestic affairs dominated the topics discussed by the local Arabic press in the past week.

Commenting on the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's visit to Washington last week, Taher Al Adwan, a columnist in Al Dustour, said that both U.S. President Bill Clinton and Mr. Rabin are determined to pursue the peace process under the U.S.-Israeli alliance sponsorship and to confront any moves on the part of Russia to hold another international conference to give an impetus to the peace process. We have reason to believe, in light of the U.S. behaviour, that the time has come for an international conference since Washington has proved to be a faithful ally of Israel and backer of its occupation, said Mr. Adwan. At the same time, the past two years of purley have proved that the Arabs have no trump cards to play and win back their rights, added the writer. He said that it is too early to judge the Russian move because Moscow has not followed its initiative with a serious campaign to hold the projected conference. Mahmoud Rimawi, a col-

umnist in Al Ra'i, said that Mr. Rabin's visit to Washington clearly underlines the fact that the U.S. sponsorship of the Arab-Israeli negotiations has met with total failure. It is clear that the U.S. and Israel are keen on pursuing the present line of negotiations which, the writer said, is clearly in favour of Israel's interests.

The Palestinian people refuse to resume negotiations with Israel unless the world community provides ample protection to the Palestinian people in the face of Israel's repression and massacres, said Ibrahim Al Absi, a columnist in Al Ra'i daily. The settlers must leave Arab lands and the Israeli authorities should stop its settlements' programmes before the talks can resume, said the writer.

The PLO is in no position to accept any invitations by Washington, Moscow or Tel Aviv to resume its talks with the Jewish state because none of these invitations favours the Palestinians, said Tareq Masarweh, the U.S. is clearly trying to benefit Israel's interests while Moscow considers matters through Washington's views and in support of them, said the writer. Israel, said the writer, is trying to persuade the PLO to come to the negotiating table by saying that it had placed two extremist groups in Israel on the list of terrorist organisations which are now

disarmed and banned, but the PLO cannot guarantee protection for the Palestinians unless U.N. peacekeeping troops are stationed in the occupied territories.

It is clear that Washington is determined to see the PLO and Israel resuming peace talks in a bid to separate the Palestinians from the rest of the Arab parties involved in the negotiations, said Salameh Ekour in Sawt Al Shaab. The writer said that it is clear from the U.S.-Israeli behaviour that they are indifferent to a decision by Lebanon, Syria and Jordan to suspend the negotiations, but they are concerned over talks between the PLO and Israel because they believe they can impose their will on the Palestinians.

Sultan Al Hattab said that there was no alternative for the Arabs but to resume negotiations with Israel and seek an end to its occupation of Arab land. The columnist, who writes for Al Ra'i daily, said that Mr. Arafat, who falls under pressure to resume the negotiations at present, should cling to his demands for providing protection for the Palestinians but should not completely burn his boats so that not to close the door of the Middle East peace negotiations.

The writer said that Mr. Arafat should negotiate a better settlement that would ensure an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people, and ensure that the children of Palestine go back to school

and acquire education and live a normal life in a free country. Those Arabs, who demand that Mr. Arafat pull out completely from the negotiations, are relying on the defenceless children of Palestine and not on Arab military strength to liberate the occupied lands, added the writer.

In the light of the Hebron massacre, the Arab masses are convinced that they should not resume talks with Israel unless protection has been guaranteed for the Palestinian people, said Mohammad Kawash in Al Dustour. The writer said that the massacre has clearly revealed the evil intentions of the Israeli government, which is far from being oriented towards peace.

Once again, the United States succeeded in forcing the world community to extend the embargo on Iraq and once again the U.S. administration turned its open hostility towards the Arab Nation, said the daily Sawt Al Shaab in a comment on the extension of the U.N. sanctions on Iraq. The paper said that the U.S. is acting out of malice and hatred towards the Arab people by depriving the Iraqi children of food and medicine and causing infectious diseases to annihilate tens of thousands of people. Once again, added the paper, the U.N. Security Council proves it is serving as a tool in the hands of the United States and adopting double standards in dealing with world issues.

Right-wing march on Homeland: victory or rout?

By David Tucker
Reuter

JOHANNESBURG — Neo-Nazi leader Eugene Terre Blanche described the right-wing march into Bophuthatswana as a "brilliant victory". But a bloody shambles would be more apt a description of the white right wing's humiliation at the hands of black South Africans in the homeland, now under the control of Pretoria and the multi-party transitional executive council.

The rightists marched into Bophuthatswana in support of its leader Lucas Mangope, who had defied calls from Pretoria and the African National Congress (ANC) to participate in South Africa's first all-race elections at the end of April.

Pretoria sent in its troops and took over the homeland at the weekend when Mr. Mangope refused to guarantee free election campaigning in Bophuthatswana.

Terre Blanche's private army of troopers, some in camouflage garb emblazoned with his Afrikaner Resistance Movement's (AWB) Swastika-like insignia, were outgunned by homeland security forces they believed were going to provide them with arms.

South Africa's army, often accused of being right-wing, obeyed without hesitation Pretoria's commands to restore order in the conservative Homeland.

Bill Nass, co-director of the independent Institute for Defence Policy, said the extreme right had been taught a sharp lesson by its abortive intervention in the Homeland.

"As far as the right are concerned, I think they will have at least realised they are not able to take on armed formations and police. It's clear the right wing is not as heavily armed as we think," he said.

The AWB's shotguns and "soft-skinned" pick up trucks were no match for the assault rifles and light armour homeland forces used against them. Rightwingers, some in T-shirts and jeans rather than military garb, said they had been told they would be issued with weapons after obeying the mobilisation call.

South Africa's former army chief general Constand Viljoen withdrew his force of several thousand Afrikaner Volksfront rightwingers after it became clear that the more radical right was out of control.

Random drive-by shootings of black civilians in the homeland capital Mmabatho and its twin town Mafikeng and the execution-style killings of two white rightwingers by Homeland police had turned intervention into

anarchy.

Any welcome the rightists may have had from beleaguered Bophuthatswana, itself a point of dispute between Terre Blanche and Viljoen and then Homeland leaders, had clearly run out.

One Volksfront member, interviewed by local radio, described the AWB as cowboys.

"They wouldn't take orders... they were out of control," he said, adding that the AWB had started shooting as soon as they left the Mmabatho airstrip where they were briefly based.

Mr. Nass, a former army brigadier, said he believed the radical right might go underground and form "terrorist cells."

"I don't think they will try again and engage in this kind of show of force... They don't have the weaponry and command and control to handle it," he said.

He expected "flag-waving to increase, the number of conservative municipalities declaring their loyalty to the Volkstaat (Afrikaner Homeland) to grow, and more 'occupations' of historic Afrikaner sites by white private armies."

Right-wing Afrikaners are demanding their own homeland in post-apartheid South Africa. But the right-wing movement has split over whether or not to take part in the April polls.

Mr. Viljoen has announced that he had quit as co-leader of the Volksfront after registering candidates for a new party.

Bophuthatswana had been part of a freedom alliance of white separatists and black autonomy-seeking homeland leaders.

Simon Baynam, senior researcher at the Pretoria-based Africa Institute, said he also believed the radical right might be forced underground to wage guerrilla war in the same manner as the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland and mainland Britain.

"Bophuthatswana was something of a shambles... but the white right can cause damage totally disproportionate to their numbers," said Mr. Baynam.

Mr. Baynam said the right wing had shown it could field large numbers of men with little notice but "bakkies (pickup trucks) are no match for real armour and heavy machineguns."

While the AWB was licking its wounds over the weekend, the white private Pretoria Boere Kommando quietly took control of a historic fort near Pretoria.

When it did the same thing at a nearby fort late last year, the South African army turned out in force. This time no one but tourists did.



Schindler's List - no thank you

By G.H. Jansen

NICOSIA, Cyprus — I will not be seeing the Spielberg film "Schindler's List," the film on the Holocaust which is not to be shown in Jordan, but is going to open in Cyprus in a charity premier on Monday evening, patronised by the First Lady. I will be staying away not because Spielberg's two last films, though hugely successful and profitable, were childish and sentimental and, basically, rubbishy, nor because the "List" is a "weepy" — a three hanky weepy evidently. No, this is a serious film, perhaps even a good one, so reasons for staying away should be serious.

I was familiar with the story of Schindler because, some years ago I read the original book, "Schindler's Arc," a much better title than "Schindler's List," one of the several fine novels produced by that fine novelist Thomas Kenneally, perhaps the best novelist writing today in English. That book was not a "weepy"; it was, if anything, bracing and inspiring. And therein lies my objection to the film and to its background.

The film is part of the sentimental and emotional exploitation of the Holocaust that has been sedulously fostered by the Jewish state of Israel — exploited to the last tear drop and to the last dollar that could be extracted in sympathy for the victims. I am not one of those who say, crazily, that the Holocaust never happened. It did, and even the word "tragedy" is inadequate to describe it: "catastrophe" perhaps, but not a natural catastrophe because it was a highly unnatural catastrophe. But just as unnatural is the exploitation of the event that was to become what may be called the "Holocaust Industry Limited," managing director Simon Wiesenthal, the Nazi hunter of men in their seventies and eighties, with deputy director Elie Wiesel, Nobel laureate.

In late 1960 I happened to be making the first of my periodic visits to Israel, which the Israeli authorities are, now making more and more difficult, when the industry was being founded. Eichmann had been, criminally,

abducted from Argentina and was in Jerusalem awaiting trial. At that time the Israeli government discovered that the Israeli public was not all that exercised in mind by the Eichmann affair and, what was worse, the younger generation of Israelis, when they were not bored by it, felt that the Jews of Europe who had meekly gone like lambs to the slaughter in the death camps, without much resistance, had been cowards. (A feeling they shared with no less a personage than Mahatma Gandhi who believed that the Jews of Europe should have at least offered mass passive resistance.) Death camp survivors bearing their camp numbers tattooed on their left arms were roughed up by Israeli-born suba youth because, by still being alive, they were thought to have somehow let down those who had perished. Israelis, tired of the exploitation of the Holocaust, which they call "Shoah," jokingly say, "There is no business like Shoah business."

The decision was then taken to launch a vast multimedia enlightenment campaign about the Holocaust, brainwashing really, which continues till today and of which films like "Schindler's List" for a part. The film had its premier in Jerusalem a few days after its world premier. This location and timing is part of the widespread belief that, somehow, there is a linkage, almost a causal connection, between the Holocaust and the state of Israel: which does not, necessarily, exist. As we have seen, Israel adopted the Holocaust twelve years after the state was founded and as a result of the Eichmann trial and, of course, the Holocaust took place 50 years after the Zionists began their campaign to capture Palestine and to make it into a Jewish state.

The Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, Yad Vashem, was set up soon after the state's foundation and since then just about every visitor to the Holy City is wheeled in and shown around (us visitors to Delhi are taken willy-nilly to the cremation spot of Gandhi. But no great fuss was made over the Holocaust as an event till the Eichmann trial and the establishment of

the Holocaust industry.

It did not take the Israelis long to find out that the Holocaust industry worked, it paid off, by producing favourable political and economic results. Politically, by going back to the past sufferings of the Jews in central and eastern Europe, it convinced that the Jews from there had to be found a home elsewhere, in Palestine for instance. And the tale of past sufferings diverted attention from the fact that creating the new state had reduced three-quarters of a million of the native inhabitants of Palestine to the status of homeless refugees.

Likewise, the tales of past sufferings backed up claims for reparations, which are still being paid, and it also softened hearts to produce generous contributions to the new state.

Little wonder then that a new large museum of the Holocaust has been located in Washington, improbably, because Jews were never persecuted in the U.S., rather the opposite, but, cleverly, because it helped indoctrinate the constituents of the American congressmen who year after year vote to donate billions of dollars of the American taxpayers' money to support Israel.

So much then for the exploitation of the Holocaust, cynical and sickening. Yet inside Israel the Holocaust industry was a failure. It should have sensitised Israelis to the horrors of racism and racist violence which it has failed to do because, as the Hebrew mosque massacre revealed, there are in the country groups of violent racists, like the mass murderer Baruch Goldstein, whose admirers consider him a hero and whose grave has become a place of pious pilgrimage. Furthermore, two weeks ago Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin tried to bring into his cabinet the Tsomet party that advocates the wholesale deportation of the Palestinian people from Israel and Palestine... shades of the mass deportations of Jews in Europe.

The second reason why I will not be seeing "Schindler's List" is its present timing. It is sheer bad luck for the film that it should be

released just after the Jewish settler Goldstein, with an accomplice as it now appears, gunned down over 40 Palestinians, including children, praying in the mosque at Hebron. A crime, a mass murder that the Israelis have tried to gloss over by ascribing it to a single madman when it is the product of a climate that tolerates racial intolerance in a whole sector of Israeli society. It shows that the sufferings of the Jews in the Holocaust have taught the citizens of the Jewish state nothing — except that they can get away with behaving not very differently from their former persecutors. Since the mosque massacre more Palestinian civilians have been killed by army gunfire than the Israelis say were killed in the mosque by the settlers: the killings are going on and on. They are quantitatively very different from the Holocaust but qualitatively and morally much the same thing.

Over which killings should spectators in Cyprus shed tears: over killings that took place 50 years ago in Germany and Poland or over killings happening now in next door Palestine?

The behaviour of the Israelis over the last few years proves the truth of Summerset Maugham's opinion, once dismissed as cynical, that suffering does not necessarily ennoble and that it is just as likely to enrage and degrade.

Will "Schindler's List" have the effect of impressing this truth on its Israeli viewers? Will it make them look at themselves and what they are doing, possibly but not probably. Yet surely, if Israel has enjoyed the benefits it has extracted from the crimes committed against Jews it should be prepared to accept responsibility for crimes committed by Jews on another people.

Spielberg is reported to have said that he did not know what the subject of his next film would be. Promptly the writers of letters to the editor of British newspapers suggested that he might consider making an epic film on the sufferings of the Palestinians. If he does that then the two films would be worth watching, together.

Israel, PLO continue contacts

(Continued from page 1)

spots. The 450 settlers now live in six buildings scattered among the 110,000 Palestinians in Hebron.

Israel has rejected PLO demands to post armed foreign troops in the city. Mr. Rabin also is against evacuating Hebron or any other settlements before a final peace settlement is reached.

He has proposed Arab police be deployed in Hebron, provided they are under Israeli authority.

He told journalists in Rome on Thursday that Israeli settlement in Hebron was "stupid" and he was weighing taking further steps but did not elaborate.

Rabbi Moshe Levinger, a founder of the Hebron settlement, responded angrily to the reports. Mr. Levinger accused Mr. Rabin of "insulting our forefathers and all Israeli history."

Israel has as many as 1,500 troops in Hebron to protect settlers and the army's presence often leads to clashes with Palestinians. At least 11

Palestinians have been killed in clashes with the army since the Feb. 25 massacre.

Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Terry Larsen, as part of a scheme to get the PLO and Israel to resume their talks, has proposed that Mr. Peres and Mr. Arafat meet Sunday in Cairo.

Mr. Larsen has spent the last week in Tunis trying to coax the Palestinians back to the negotiations.

Mr. Larsen was a key figure in the secret negotiations that produced the Sept. 13 peace accord between Israel and the PLO on limited autonomy for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

Mr. Larsen reportedly secured a pledge Wednesday from Mr. Rabin to remove some settlers from Hebron. PLO officials said Mr. Larsen had also gained Israeli acceptance of a proposal for joint Israeli-Palestinian police patrols in Hebron and joint administration of the town.

The added measures,

according to one official who declined to be identified, entail a Red Cross presence in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank as a way of satisfying PLO demands for protection of Palestinians.

Mr. Arafat summoned the PLO executive committee to a meeting late Thursday to consider the Norwegian-mediated proposals. But after three hours, the committee decided to postpone a decision until after the Security Council meeting, said Mr. Ghosheh.

Mr. Ghosheh said that under the present circumstances, the package "is unacceptable because it is a far cry from our demands for security and safety for our people."

Mr. Peres and Mr. Rabin met on Friday for a second time since Mr. Rabin returned late on Thursday night from a trip dedicated to urging resumption of the peace talks in Washington and at the Vatican.

Mr. Peres said before the meeting he was concerned over the location of settlers amid Palestinians in Hebron.

Asked if Israel was considering moving the settlers from five areas of settlement in Hebron into one area in the city, Mr. Peres said:

"There is no doubt that the deployment is awful. We are

deployed over five points ... and there is concern at this deployment."

"The dream that it was possible to have coexistence between the settlers and the Palestinians, to my great sorrow, that dream took an awful blow at the Cave of the Patriarchs, (Ibrahimi Mosque)."

Mr. Peres emphasised moving settlers was a purely Israeli issue and not subject to negotiation. Israel has insisted there can be no deviation from the September accord.

Mr. Rabin on Thursday in Rome called the Jewish settlement in Hebron "dumb from a security standpoint" and a risk to Jewish lives.

"I don't want to link the settlers' staying in Hebron (to the peace talks). Mr. Rabin told reporters in Rome, where he visited Pope John Paul II. But Mr. Rabin added that he had never supported the Hebron settlement, even during his previous term as prime minister from 1974-1977, "because I knew what the result would be."

"The Jewish settlement in Hebron was built in a stupid manner security-wise. It is not built in one place, but dispersed throughout Hebron and whoever did that, did it while taking a risk with Jewish lives," Mr. Rabin said.

Security Council split on Iraq

(Continued from page 1)

France and its backers want to amend the standard statement issued after each 60-day review of the sanctions.

But the end result could well be no statement, said Britain's Ambassador Sir David Hannay.

The statement, which must be approved by all 15 council members, carries no legal weight but discussions on it reflect a growing split on how to handle Iraq in the future. The council will not consider lifting the oil embargo against Iraq until the U.N. Special Commission, in charge of removing all of Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction, has completed its work.

But divisions have been evident for months with key members balking at American and British headline positions on eventually lifting the oil embargo.

Some council members, who might have backed France, were angered by a letter from Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister

Tareq Aziz, currently in New York lobbying council members. The letter threatened further unspecified action unless there is movement towards lifting the oil embargo.

Mr. Aziz also accused the special commission of dragging its heels and of failing to announce a date for the start of implementation of long-term monitoring of Iraqi facilities capable of use for both civilian and military purposes.

"It was a very unfortunate letter and I think everyone agrees with that," Mr. Hannay said.

The oil embargo is linked to compliance on Security Council weapons demands. Most council members, including France, will probably also insist that Iraq recognise Kuwait before the embargo is eased. But the United States, backed in part by Britain, wants many other issues linked to lifting Iraqi exports, not contained in a 1991 Gulf war ceasefire resolution.

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A bridge of cultures

Young Japanese exchange technical skills for experience of life in the Mideast

By Ian Atalla
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Tomoe Murakami's stay in Jordan has taken her a bit beyond the paths and people known to most foreign visitors. She lives in one of the poorest sections of Aqaba, and works as a handicrafts instructor in the citizen Vocational Training Centre. Her students come from Aqaba, the surrounding villages and the badia.

Ms. Murakami is working in Jordan through the Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) programme, which is sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She is among 34 JOCV volunteers in Jordan, mainly serving as specialised instructors for schools, vocational centres and universities as technical consultants, and as nurses.

Miyuki Kawashima, an ex-volunteer, worked as a special education teacher for the Young Muslim Women's Association (YMWA).

"I came back to visit because I miss the cooking here," she said lightheartedly. "I learned some Arabic cooking from my Iraqi friend in the institution." She has not lost any enthusiasm about her experiences in Jordan: "If there were a place for me," she said, "I would love to come back and work here. I enjoyed every day of it, visiting friends, learning the Arabic language and Arabic cooking — every day learning something new."

The volunteers' two-year stay can be a very difficult trial, however, some of them said. Yukari Hida insisted that she was happy so far. "But," she added in a low voice, "it's been a difficult two months here."

"We have some experience and knowledge, but not always enough to deal with such a different culture," explained Keisuke Nakashima, who also works as a special education teacher at the YMWA. "It takes some time for us and our Jordanian co-workers to get to know each other."

Some female volunteers told the Jordan Times that they had faced harassment on the streets of the communities in which they lived and worked. "This is a big problem the

women volunteers have here," said Ms. Murakami. "Harassment from young men and boys — even stonethrowing."

In addition, there is the barrier of language. "They cannot speak any Arabic at first," said Takashii Ito, a JOCV coordinator. "After the first five to six months, they can communicate somewhat in Arabic."

The JOCV programme, which was established in 1965, currently counts some 2,000 volunteers working in 50 developing countries. Its official objective is to send skilled workers "to cooperate, in unity with the people of developing areas, in the economic and social development of the areas."

"In Japan, we have the idea that the Middle East is a strange and dangerous area. But the volunteers come here and see that this is not the case. When they go back to Japan, they can let others see Jordan as it really is," Takashii Ito, JOCV coordinator.

Around 140 JOCV volunteers are currently serving in five Middle Eastern countries — Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen as well as Jordan, which began enlisting the JOCV's services in 1985 through the Ministry of Planning.

"The volunteers are here as cooperation, not as directors," said Mr. Ito. They are fully responsible to answer to the orders and guidelines of their native supervisors and the agencies which they work for. Even so, said Ms. Murakami, "I feel that it is my responsibility to voice to my directors what problems I see at the Vocational Training Centre."

Any paid employee, she said, would naturally feel constrained in voicing any criticisms, "as they must first worry about their salaries, which they depend on for a living. But a volunteer doesn't have to worry about holding on to a salary. I can give them an honest opinion."

Mayumi Takahashi's experience as an operating room nurse at the Jerash Hospital was different. "For small problems which are easily solveable, they lis-

ten," she said. But as a general rule, "doctors here don't want opinions from nurses — they want obedience."

Another factor, suggested Ms. Murakami, was that Ms. Takahashi was the first-ever JOCV volunteer to work at the Jerash Hospital.

"In Aqaba, my co-workers' attitude towards me is good — I am the third volunteer from Japan to work at the Vocational Training Centre. But it takes the first volunteer to really break the ice — the first volunteer always faces problems."

Mr. Ito cautioned that the volunteers should not think of themselves as full-blown experts with all the cures and solutions that Jordanians needed.

face is the language barrier. "Language is the most difficult problem," said Mr. Nakashima. "We have to speak Arabic in the school because the students don't understand Arabic. It is often difficult, but I've found some ways to communicate without speaking — like body language, for instance."

Ms. Takahashi concurred: "I can't speak Arabic very well and many nurses at the hospital don't speak English very well." This had led more than once to some serious misunderstandings, she said.

Mr. Ito said that he was well aware of the language problem for the volunteers. "We are pushing the head office in Japan that (the volunteers) receive training in Arabic before they come here."

But when all was said and done in the end, none of the volunteers regretted the time they had spent in Jordan, despite whatever difficulties they had faced.

"I would like to stay more, and would be happy to come back again as a volunteer," said Mr. Nakashima.

"Some bad things have happened, but at the same time, I have felt the friendship and warmth of another people," said Ms. Takahashi.

Mr. Ito felt that the volunteers' value to Jordan and Japan was not primarily what they had to offer technically, but instead what role they could play in breaking down the barriers of disinformation and ignorance which exist between two such vastly different cultures.

"In Japan, we have the idea that the Middle East is a strange and dangerous area. But the volunteers come here, and see that this is not the case. And when they go back to Japan, they can let others see Jordan as it really is."

"At the same time, our volunteers are an example to Jordanians of real-life Japanese, without the stereotypes and myths of the samurai and the long swords, and so forth."

What was most important for her, said Ms. Murakami, was that "I can now understand a people and a country with a different point of view from ours. I am not trapped in one way of thinking only."

King contacts Arab leaders ahead of vote

(Continued from page 1)

pled territories.

In Amman, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Talal Al Hassan met at the Foreign Ministry with the ambassadors of the permanent and non-permanent member states at the U.N. Security Council and discussed with them the draft Security Council resolution.

The minister had separate meetings with the ambassadors of the U.S., the United Kingdom, France and Russia in addition to the Chinese charge d'affaires in Amman.

He also met with the ambassadors of Spain, Pakistan, and Brazil as well as the Omani charge d'affaires.

Clinton in contacts

U.S. President Bill Clinton telephoned the leaders of Egypt and Syria on Thursday to discuss ways of getting Mideast peace talks back on track, the White House said. In calls to President Mubarak and President Assad, Mr.

security measures.

A senior U.S. official said Wednesday that the administration might propose to Syria a "right time" to send negotiators back to Washington to resume the peace talks (see page 2).

Syria said on Friday that Israeli talk of having to make "painful decisions" to secure peace with it was a manoeuvre to disguise Jewish hostility to real peace.

The official daily Al Thawra said Syria would make no concession on its rights and any talk not based on returning Arab land for peace was a

snare and a delusion. "Arabs will never abandon an inch of their land or any part of their rights," it added.

Mr. Rabin said after his talks with President Clinton on Wednesday he expected to sign a peace treaty with Syria this year and that Israel was to make painful decisions the process.

Rabin's statement comes after the Hebron massacre and his for Syrian concern that the remark words given as a r. hide Israel's firm real peace," Al

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UAE banks set to boost capital

ABU DHABI (R) — A number of domestic banks in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are poised to raise their capital to expand business in 1994 and meet new central bank lending rules, bankers have said.

UAE-based foreign banks took the lead earlier this year by pumping more funds into their branches to keep up the pace on lending while meeting the new rules which for the first time link lending to capital.

As of January, banks — 19 domestic and 27 foreign-owned — were given two years to adjust to the rules that limit the amount a bank can lend to a public sector institution to 25 per cent of its capital and to a private institution or borrower

to seven per cent.

Dubai Islamic Bank and National Bank of Ras Al Khaimah will decide this month whether to increase capital, bankers said.

Dubai Islamic Bank chief accountant Hussein Al Rifai said it will decide on March 30 whether to double capital to 420 million dirhams (\$114 million) "because of the central bank rules... to be comfortable with the capital adequacy ratios."

National Bank of Ras Al Khaimah General John Parsons said it was considering even before the rules changed to increase capital to 150 million dirhams (\$41 million) from 129.8 million dirhams (\$35 mil-

lion) in order to meet business growth.

"It will hopefully allow us to maintain a generous capital adequacy ratio and increase ability for clean funded exposures," he said.

In a letter to shareholders obtained by Reuters United Arab Bank said it would convene an extraordinary meeting on March 20 to approve an increase of capital to 94.5 million dirhams (\$26 million) from 90 million dirhams (\$24 million).

Commercial Bank of Dubai is considering whether to raise its paid-up capital to about 300 million dirhams (\$82 million) from 220 million (\$60 million) "because of the regulations of the central bank," a bank offi-

cial said.

National Bank of Fujairah is expected to decide a "significant increase" of its paid-up capital from 150 million dirhams (\$40.8 million) to support expansion plans, a banker said.

The newspaper Al Khaleej said Wednesday it was likely to increase its capital by 60 million dirhams (\$16.5 million).

A UAE finance official said there were recent meetings on whether to raise capital of the Arab Bank for Investment and Foreign Trade, whose Libyan shareholding led U.S. authorities to freeze the bank's U.S.-based assets in 1992, to 760 million dirhams (\$207 million) from 450 million dirhams (\$123 million).

Spanish premier urges Socialist party to unite in fight for jobs

MADRID (R) — Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez Friday urged the Socialist Party to unite to fight unemployment and promote business competitiveness as vital ingredients for the future of the welfare state.

Speaking at the opening session of his Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) national congress, Mr. Gonzalez said the party had to be ready to change to meet the needs of a changing society.

In an hour-long speech he also stressed the need to maximise the role of women in society and to tackle environmental problems and increasing immigration, mainly from North Africa.

"This congress will be an intense debate of ideas, with the fight against unemployment and the promotion of competitiveness the central issues," Mr. Gonzalez told 880 delegates and more than 1,000 international guests and observers.

"We have to take clear initiatives... and move aggressively forward to find solutions which are understood by the people and which are viable," he said.

The 33rd PSOE congress comes at a moment when the party, in power for the last 11 years, is at its lowest ebb in voters' favour as it grapples with a recession which has

driven unemployment above 23 per cent of the workforce.

Now governing in a minority, the party has also had to deal with glaring differences within its own ranks over the nature and aims of socialism.

The build-up to the congress has been dominated by a rift between a liberal, "renewal" wing, backed by Mr. Gonzalez, and more hardline orthodox socialists led by deputy leader Alfonso Guerra. It is not clear whether Mr. Guerra will remain on the party executive committee, to be elected on Sunday.

In his speech, Mr. Gonzalez urged the party to unite. "We have three ways to clarify ideas, to heal wounds and unite our wills," he said.

The party had suffered "considerable internal tension" which created a negative impression abroad.

"Society is concerned by anything which smacks of crisis or turmoil in the Socialist Party," Mr. Gonzalez said. "What gives us the right to represent the majority of the Spanish people is our ability to adapt to the complex realities of a society in permanent change."

"There is nothing strange about us arriving at this congress talking about renewal," the socialist leader said.

Party militants fear that internal divisions could obscure the strong political message

the party needs to give society on its commitment to economic renewal and job creation.

"If the image the congress presents is just of a struggle for power, that would be precisely the opposite of what we are aiming for," Manuel Escudero, a member of the liberal wing, said earlier this week.

At the centre of congress debate under the slogan "a new boost for socialism" is a 100-page policy document to which more than 7,200 amendments have been presented for discussion in plenary sessions and separate committees.

Assuming he is reelected secretary-general, Mr. Gonzalez will close the congress with a speech Sunday.

Hundreds of helmeted police with riot shields were stationed outside Madrid's Congress Palace to control a demonstration by some 1,000 workers from Santana Motor Company, threatened with losing more than 60 per cent of 2,400 jobs at a plant in Linares, Andalusia.

Santana's owner, Suzuki Corp. of Japan, is demanding the job cuts as part of a viability plan for the loss-making company.

China owns up to higher budget deficit

BEIJING (R) — China's finance minister has owned up to a huge deficit for this year in his budget plan and was not sure how his figures would end up because revamping of the financial and tax system.

Lin Zhongli told the National People's Congress, or parliament, that widespread tax evasion, misuse of funds, false reporting and the drastic overhaul of the tax system all made it difficult to fulfil the budget targets.

He said the 1994 budget would post a deficit of 66.919 billion yuan (\$7.69 billion), under new accounting rules that bring Beijing into line with international practice.

Under the old system, last year's actual deficit was 20.5 billion (\$2.36 billion).

"Our accounting will un-

avoidably fall short of reality," Mr. Lin said, adding that a major overhaul of the tax system, brought in on Jan. 1, has made it very difficult to accurately assess the true revenue situation.

"Disparity between the design of the plan and the reality can hardly be avoided," he said. "The plan will have to be readjusted and improved in the course of implementation."

The new accounting method no longer included borrowings as revenue nor spending to service debt as part of total expense.

Economists say the new accounting method more faithfully reflects the true state of the country's finances. Using that method, China's cumulative budget deficit between 1979 and 1993 was more than

422 billion yuan (\$48.5 billion).

Mr. Liu said that this year's deficit would be somewhat larger than last year's if the 1993 figure was recalculated using the new system. He did not give a detailed analysis.

To cover the deficit and payment of domestic and foreign debt, China will issue domestic bonds worth 115 billion yuan (\$13.2 billion), Mr. Liu said.

This is a three-fold increase from last year when public reluctance to buy bonds resulted in state firms and government departments forcing their staff to buy them by taking the money out of salaries.

Mr. Liu said expenditure in the 1994 budget will rise 15 per cent from the 1993 level to 542.914 billion yuan (\$62.4 billion) and revenue will 7.7 per cent to 475.995 billion (\$54.7 billion).

But he admitted that, because the country is in the midst of a drastic overhaul of its financial and tax system, he was not sure how all the figures will end up.

From Jan. 1, China implemented a new system, including a value-added tax, consumption tax and turnover tax, aimed at increasing Beijing's share of overall tax revenue.

Inflation in Tunisia falls to 4%

TUNIS (R) — Tunisia's inflation rate dropped to four per cent at the end of 1993, its lowest for 15 years, the government's Institute National de La Statistique (INS) said.

Economists said the inflation rate, as measured by the consumer price index (CPI), fell despite a policy of relaxing curbs on prices and imports and making the dinar convertible for trade.

Planning ministry experts attributed the fall to economic liberalisation, relatively stable

import prices, favourable supply conditions associated with agriculture production and prudent government financial policies.

Inflation declined from an average of 9.6 per cent during the first half of the 1980s to 7.0 per cent a year during 1986-1992.

The INS expanded the CPI components to make the index conform with growing welfare needs. It adjusted the rate to 5.8 in 1992 and 8.3 for 1991. According to the old CPI it was 5.5 for 1992 and 7.8 for 1991.

Financial Markets			
In co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank			
U.S. Dollar in International Markets			
Currency	New York Close 16/3/94	Tokyo Close 16/3/94	
Sterling Pound	1.4948	1.4935	
Deutsche Mark	1.6890	1.6871	
Swiss Franc	1.4323	1.4325	
French Franc	5.7420	5.7425**	
Japanese Yen	105.06	105.78	
European Currency Unit	1.1430	1.1435**	
* End PM WTC European Opening at 8:00 AM, GMT			
Eurocurrency Interest Rates			
Currency	1 MTH	3 MTH	6 MTH
U.S. Dollar	5.2500	5.2525	5.2550
Sterling Pound	4.8750	4.8750	4.9375
Deutsche Mark	5.6275	5.6275	5.3750
Swiss Franc	3.8750	3.7500	5.6275
French Franc	6.0625	6.0000	5.8125
Japanese Yen	2.0000	2.1250	2.1250
European Currency Unit	6.2200	6.0600	5.9300
* Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding 1 M. Dollars, 1,000,000 or equivalent.			
Precious Metals			
Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm	Metal
Gold	354.40	7.50	Silver
			5.38
			0.120
Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin			
Currency	Bid	Offer	
U.S. Dollar	0.7000	0.7020	
Sterling Pound	1.0445	1.0497	
Deutsche Mark	0.4146	0.4167	
Swiss Franc	0.4563	0.4607	
French Franc	0.1219	0.1225	
Japanese Yen	0.0069	0.0072	
Dutch Guilder	0.3640	0.3708	
Swedish Krona	0.0420	0.0422	
Italian Lira	0.0420	0.0422	
Belgian Franc	0.0420	0.0422	
Other Currencies			
Currency	Bid	Offer	
Bahraini Dinar	1.8340	1.8530	
Lebanese Lira	0.040580	0.041675	
Saudi Riyal	0.1863	0.1872	
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3300	2.3550	
Qatari Riyal	0.1900	0.1910	
Egyptian Pound	0.2050	0.2200	
Omani Riyal	1.7850	1.8110	
UAE Dirham	0.1900	0.1910	
Greek Drachma	0.2735	0.3125	
Cypriot Pound	1.3340	1.3850	

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London Foreign Exchange and bullion markets Friday.

U.S. \$1.00 costs	1.3680/90	Canadian dollar	1.6923/33
	1.9029/39	Deutsche marks	1.4378/88
	34.86/90	Dutch guilders	5.7625/75
	1673.8/5.3	Swiss francs	106.12/22
	7.8405/05	Belgian francs	7.3413/63
	6.6240/90	French francs	51.4890/00
	1.3340/90	Italian lire	3385.80/386.30
	1.3340/90	Japanese yen	
	1.3340/90	Swedish crowns	
	1.3340/90	Norwegian crowns	
	1.3340/90	Danish crowns	
One sterling	1.3340/90		
One ounce of gold	3385.80/386.30		

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Seoul talks tough over N. Korean nuclear row

SEOUL (R) — South Korea and the West are losing their patience with North Korea, which has refused to allow full inspections of its declared nuclear sites, said a senior government official, who asked not be named, told Reuters.

"It is time to apply sticks as well as carrots," he said, referring to Washington's approach in its drive to persuade North Korea to give up its suspected nuclear arms programme.

South Korea and the United States were also reconsidering their decision to suspend "Team Spirit" joint military exercises and were discussing anew the deployment of U.S. Patriot missiles in the South, the official said.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher telephoned South Korean Foreign Minister Han Sun-Joo Friday to discuss future steps, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

He said Mr. Christopher and Mr. Han had agreed that high-level talks between Washington and Pyongyang were now unlikely to take place next week as scheduled.

"The two said they would not abandon efforts for dialogue, but at the same time they agreed to seek new countermeasures if dialogue proved fruitless," the spokesman said.

The United States had agreed to resume the talks and suspend Team Spirit only if Pyongyang fully allowed the nuclear inspections and exchanged envoys with Seoul as part of an inter-Korean dialogue on nuclear issues.

A government official, quoted by the domestic Yonhap News Agency, said Friday that Seoul would now have to support any U.N. action required to force North Korea to end its nuclear ambitions.

The official was quoted as saying North Korea's decision to block nuclear inspections raised the prospect of U.N. Security Council action.

The West suspects North Korea has a nuclear arms programme and U.S. intelligence chiefs fear Pyongyang could already have a crude nuclear bomb. North Korea denies this.

After a two-week trip to North Korea, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the U.N. nuclear watchdog, said its experts had been blocked from conducting some tests at a key atomic site in Yongbyon, north of Pyongyang.

The IAEA said it was "not in a position to verify that there had been no diversion of nuclear material at the facility."

South Korean President Kim Young-Sam told Japan's public television, NHK, Thursday that international sanctions against North Korea might be unavoidable after Pyongyang's obstruction of the inspection.

U.S. television network NBC reported Thursday that the U.S. Navy was keeping 30 warships, including two aircraft carrier battle groups, within a day's steaming of North Korea.

The presence of such a large armada could be a coincidence but it might also signal the importance the United States attached to the situation in North Korea, NBC News said.

Chung Chung-Wook, Mr. Kim's senior adviser on national security, declined to confirm the NBC report but warned the North that time was running out.

Mr. Chung told reporters that border talks between North and South Korea aimed at arranging the envoy exchange would take place as scheduled Saturday.

"The North should provide a breakthrough tomorrow if it wants to keep hopes alive for resolving the nuclear issue through negotiations," the Seoul official said.

Meanwhile, CIA Director James Woolsey said Thursday that North Korea is developing two new ballistic missiles with ranges long enough "to put at risk" all of South East Asia, the Pacific and, it exported, Europe.

"We can confirm that the North Koreans are developing two additional missiles with ranges greater than the 1,000 kilometre missile that it flew last year," Mr. Woolsey said in remarks prepared for delivery to a symposium.

S. Africa's Zulu king proclaims independence

ULUNDI, South Africa (Agencies) — The king of the Zulus proclaimed himself head of a sovereign kingdom Friday and said his followers would "defend it at all costs" against incorporation into South Africa.

King Goodwill Zwelethini issued one of his angriest speeches ever, a day after ANC President Nelson Mandela called off what would have been a historic summit with the monarch.

"We are here today to proclaim before the world our freedom and sovereignty and our unwavering will to defend it at all costs," he told several thousand loyal subjects, many of whom waved guns and spears. His speech raised the possibility the KwaZulu homeland legislature would officially announce its independence, crushing hopes of its participation in South Africa's April 26-28 election.

The announcement was likely to increase tensions between the Zulu-strong Inkatha Freedom Party and the rival African National Congress and spark more of the political clashes that have plagued the country.

King Goodwill said he was offended by Mr. Mandela's cancellation and dismissed ANC claims the black leader's security couldn't be guaranteed in Ulundi, the capital of KwaZulu.

Mr. Mandela had hoped to persuade the king to drop his demand for a sovereign kingdom — a demand that is perhaps the greatest stumbling block to ensuring free and fair elections in April.

The king has refused to endorse participation in the vote

unless he is guaranteed sovereignty to avoid living under ANC rule. The ANC is expected to score an overwhelming victory in the balloting.

Without the king's approval, it is virtually impossible for Inkatha to contest the vote. That has led to fears of uncontrollable violence in Natal province, which includes KwaZulu and which already is the scene of a virtual war between supporters of the ANC and Inkatha.

"We have reached the end of a road, and we are faced with the harsh reality that the government cannot and will not facilitate the restoration of the sovereign kingdom of KwaZulu," King Goodwill said. "It is important that... all the Zulu people begin to promote and defend the restoration of the kingdom. We shall resist any attempt to constrain the forces of our liberation," he added.

Many of those in the crowd Friday were dressed in traditional Zulu costumes of fur and feathers and carried spears and shields. But there also were scores of modern weapons displayed, including AK-47 assault rifles.

"I think Mandela is afraid of being hated by the Zulu," said 19-year-old Baartse Zulu. "Dr. Mandela wants to overthrow the Zulu kingdom. People will kill him if he comes to meet the king."

The ANC said it called off Friday's planned summit because of indications Mr. Mandela would be attacked if he came to Ulundi.

"Anyone who wants to kill a person of Mandela's stature...

it would be madness," said Inkatha leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

The ANC tried to have the meeting between Mr. Mandela and the king moved to Durban, a proposal Mr. Buthelezi said was an insult to the monarch. "Do you see a monarch... anywhere else in the world who would travel outside to see" a commoner, he said.

Mr. Buthelezi said Friday he was not optimistic that a breakthrough could be achieved in constitutional negotiations to involve his Inkatha Freedom Party in South Africa's elections.

"I really wish we should have a breakthrough. But I'm not optimistic... There is no peace in this region already. I'm really concerned," he told reporters outside the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly.

But he added without elaborating: "Personally, as far as I am concerned, we can still have the Bavarian option" — referring to Germany's federal system.

President F.W. de Klerk said near Johannesburg Thursday he had made a proposal to Mr. Buthelezi that would "without affecting the (election) timetable... lead to a form of participation."

Mr. Buthelezi has rejected the country's post-apartheid interim constitution and refused to participate in the first all-race elections from April 26 to 28.

Mr. de Klerk also said Thursday he was upset at a hardline speech Mr. Buthelezi had made to the KwaZulu homeland legislature saying war lay ahead if the elections went ahead without him.

REPLICA AT SEA: Crew members let out the sails on the replica of Captain Cook's ship the Endeavour, as she goes through her first day of sea trial (AFP photo)



Iranian plane crashes in Karabakh; 32 die

MOSCOW (Agencies) — An aircraft carrying Iranian women and children home for New Year celebrations has crashed in the disputed Caucasus enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, killing all 32 people on board, Russia said Friday.

A spokesman for the Civil Defence Ministry said the C-130 Hercules transport plane, carrying relatives of Iranian embassy staff in Moscow, crashed Thursday night three kilometres north of the Karabakh capital Stepanakert.

Azerbaijan, involved in a six-year conflict with Armenian forces over the enclave, immediately said the transport had been shot down and that Armenian anti-aircraft units could well be responsible. The allegation could not be confirmed.

The Russian spokesman said Armenian Air Traffic Controllers told Moscow the plane hit the ground and was totally destroyed after losing cabin pressure and descending to a lower height.

It was impossible to obtain more details from Armenia because all phone lines to the republic were down.

A duty officer at the Iranian embassy in Moscow said the 19 passengers, including women and 10 children, mainly relatives of embassy staff, who were flying home for celebrations marking the Iranian New Year. The plane had a crew of 13.

The crash of an Iranian aircraft in Nagorno-Karabakh is potentially very sensitive since Tehran, a major player in the region, has tried in the past to arrange ceasefires between the warring sides.

Several thousand people have died in six years of fighting between Armenian and Azeri forces over Nagorno-Karabakh, mainly populated by ethnic Armenians but located since 1923 on Azeri territory.

Forces from both sides are liberally equipped with various anti-aircraft weapons and several aircraft have been downed in the conflict. On at least one occasion a civilian airliner has been hit.

An Azeri Defence Ministry spokesman in the capital Baku told Reuters correspondent Richard Balmforth the aircraft had been off course when it hit the ground.

"We know the plane was shot down over Karabakh. We know Armenian anti-aircraft systems are deployed there," he said, but did not specifically say the Armenians had shot it down.

Armenian forces captured large swathes of Azerbaijan in a series of offensives last year and occupy virtually all the disputed enclave.

An Iranian embassy spokesman in Moscow told ITAR-TASS news agency that embassy representatives trying to reach the Armenian capital

Yerevan had been delayed by heavy snowfalls which had closed most of Moscow's airports Friday.

Tehran Radio said the aircraft was a military plane and had tried to contact Yerevan airport control tower before it crashed.

A team of Iranian Air Force and Foreign Ministry officials would go to the site to investigate the cause of the crash and "follow up related matters," it said.

Interfax News Agency said the crew had reported engine problems while flying over the Georgian capital, Tbilisi.

A Russian Civil Aviation spokesman said there was no evidence the plane had been shot down.

The crash occurred in thick fog in an area of snow-covered mountains, according to officials of the Nagorno-Karabakh government who declined to be named.

The plane went down near the village of Baluja. Troops encircled the site and found 31 bodies within hundreds of metres of the crash site; The remaining body was unaccounted for.

An aide to Robert Kocharyan, the Nagorno-Karabakh leader, said a special commission was investigating the crash. He promised that the investigation would be finished quickly, but declined to say whether Iranian experts would be invited to take part.

Shoes betray veiled Romeo

CAIRO (R) — A young Egyptian man dressed up as a veiled woman in the hope of reaching his closely guarded girlfriend but his shoes gave him away and he ended up in a police station on suspicion of planning acts of violence. A woman spotted the tell-tale men's shoes as the student was walking through the market in the town of Badreshin, 20 kilometres south of Cairo, on his way to his rendez-vous. She thought he was a Muslim militant. Raised the alarm and passers-by arrested the man. Police later released him. The government newspaper Al-Akhbar reported Friday.

Son tears down mother's house after quarrel

TOKYO (AP) — A man who was quarrelling with his mother drove to her house with a power shovel and tore it down, police said. Kiyomi Suzuki, 42, of Kita-Shiohara in northern Japan, had argued frequently with his mother over the upbringing of his three children, of whom he had custody after a divorce. When Mr. Suzuki visited his mother's house Tuesday night with the children, he accused her of spoiling them and went home by himself, said local police spokesman Hidemasa Takagi. Mr. Suzuki returned at around 11 p.m., driving a backhoe, a machine used to dig trenches. After evacuating the children, Mr. Suzuki tore down his mother's two-story wooden house in about 20 minutes, Mr. Takagi said. The mother, 69-year-old Masako Suzuki, escaped. No one was hurt. Mr. Suzuki, who owned the backhoe for his job as a fish breeder, was arrested on suspicion of destroying property, Mr. Takagi said.

S. Korea ships 105,000 condoms to Sarajevo

SARAJEVO (AP) — A shipment of 105,000 condoms donated by South Korea will be distributed to Sarajevans this week, a U.N. official said Thursday. "I don't really know to what extent it is going to satisfy the needs of the population," said Kris Janowski, spokesman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Sarajevo's population is around 300,000. The condoms, warehoused at Sarajevo airport, were to be distributed along with the food and other humanitarian aid regularly dispensed by the UNHCR, Mr. Janowski said. Most pharmacies in the Bosnian capital, blockaded for 23 months, ran out of birth-control pills long ago. Pre-war condom stocks are sold on the black market for about 2.50 German marks (\$1.50) each, or about one month's salary for most residents. "Before the war, I use to joke about condoms," said Hasan Bilagic, 27. "But now it is very difficult to feed my 18-month-old son, and I have to be very careful not to have another kid in such conditions."

World's biggest toad dies

STOCKHOLM (AP) — "Prince," the world's biggest toad in captivity, has died, its owner said. Prince, who has been prominently displayed on the cover of the Guinness Book of Records, died of old age Wednesday. He was 12 years old. He set a new world record in 1987 when he weighed in at 2.7 kilos (5.9 pounds). But after munching on rats before mating season last September, he easily smashed his own record of 3.7 kilos (8.1 pounds). "He didn't feel well when he was to appear at a supermarket," Swedish News Agency (TT) quoted owner Hakan Forsberg as saying. "We drove immediately to a veterinary clinic but despite applying oxygen, the doctors could not save his life," Mr. Forsberg said.

Pavarotti arrival triggers fistfight in Manila

MANILA (R) — The arrival of Italian opera star Luciano Pavarotti for a controversial concert in Manila triggered a brawl between an aide and a photographer. As reporters swarmed around the large tenor, a photographer took exception to one of the singer's aides showing him aside and poked him on the jaw, witnesses said. The aide retaliated by hurling his radio at the photographer, breaking his flash. Pavarotti's concert has sparked controversy in the Philippines as an unnecessary extravagance in a poor country.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Shuttle Columbia lands in Florida

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (R) — Five astronauts returned to Earth aboard the space shuttle Columbia Friday, touching down in Florida after a near-record two-week science and technology research mission. Columbia touched down at the Kennedy Space Centre at 8:10 a.m. est (13:10 GMT) after a 13-day, 23-hour voyage just 50 minutes short of the duration record set on its previous mission in September. The flagship of NASA's fleet landed within sight of the launch pad where it blasted off on its 5.8-million-mile (9.3-million-km) voyage on March 4. The astronauts, four men and one woman, had a diverse schedule of secondary assignments while automated furnaces and sensors carried out 11 major material experiments in the open cargo bay.

News of first Soviet blast kept from CIA

WASHINGTON (R) — Even as the CIA was saying in the late 1940s it would probably take the Soviet Union several years to produce its first nuclear bomb, the Soviets had already successfully tested the bomb, a once-secret document released Thursday said. Intelligence analysts predicted in the document, dated Sept. 20, 1949, that Moscow would not produce its first bomb until mid-1950 at the earliest, with the most probable date in mid-1953. In fact, the first Soviet nuclear blast had already taken place in Kazakhstan on Aug. 29. The explosion was announced by President Harry Truman on Sept. 23, three days after publication of the CIA's "intelligence memorandum 225." "The current estimate of the Joint Nuclear Energy Intelligence Committee is that the earliest possible date by which the USSR might be expected to produce an atomic bomb is mid-1950 and the most probable date is mid-1953," the memorandum said. The Joint Nuclear Energy Intelligence Committee was an inter-agency panel that probably included experts from the Atomic Energy Commission, successor to the Manhattan Project, which built the U.S. bombs used against Japan, according to Stan Norris, a historian of the nuclear age. "I think it's a really interesting one," Mr. Norris, of the Natural Resources Defence Council in Washington, said, referring to the CIA document. "It shows that we underestimated their (the Soviet Union's) abilities."

Russia says it is still a superpower

NEW YORK (R) — Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev said Russia cannot be a junior partner to the United States and it would be "politically dangerous" to insist Moscow play a subordinate global role. In an article in Friday's edition of the New York Times, Mr. Kozyrev said the notion of U.S. global hegemony is dangerous and unrealistic. "America cannot cope with every world problem on its own, and if it tried it would lose a great deal of strength through such overexertion. Besides, even at this difficult stage of our transition, Russia remains a superpower — and not only as measured by nuclear and missile strength, but by its natural resources, technological skills and strategic geography," Mr. Kozyrev said. He said there was simply no alternative to genuine partnership between the United States and Russia and both sides must be prepared for hard compromises to make it work. Mr. Kozyrev denied what he said were Western threats to reduce economic cooperation with Russia, describing such threats as "provocative and senseless." He said Russia under Communism or nationalist regimes would be an aggressive and threatening power, while under democratic rule it would be peaceful and prosperous. "But in either case it would be a great power."

Russian duma fails to scrap CIS treaty

MOSCOW (R) — Conservative opponents of President Boris Yeltsin failed Friday to force a debate on whether to scrap the 1991 treaty which abolished the Soviet Union and set up the Commonwealth of Independent States. The move in the lower house of parliament, proposed by former Soviet parliamentary Chairman Anatoly Lukyanov, failed because only 179 deputies backed putting it on the agenda, well short of the 223 needed, 88 opposed it and 25 abstained. Although the motion in the State Duma had little chance of success, it was another reminder to Mr. Yeltsin, now on a two-week holiday, that his opponents show little sign of heading the president's frequent calls for reconciliation. Conservatives and Communists oppose the Commonwealth, largely Mr. Yeltsin's creation, and want to re-establish a single state in its place, an idea which has caused alarm in other CIS capitals. Mr. Lukyanov wanted the parliament to reverse the previous legislature's ratification of the 1991 treaty, thus destroying the legal basis for Russia's membership of the CIS.

U.K. builder charged with 9th murder

GLOUCESTER, England (R) — Police probing Britain's macabre "house of horrors" killings said Friday they had charged builder Frederick West with the murder of a ninth woman, a 15-year-old who disappeared nearly 20 years ago.

Mr. West, 52, had already been charged with murdering eight women whose bodies were buried in the narrow garden or entombed beneath his home at 25 Cromwell Street.

Gloucestershire Police said Mr. West, currently in police custody, was charged Thursday night with the murder of 15-year-old Carol Ann Cooper. She was last seen alive by her boyfriend in the nearby city of Worcester nearly 20 years ago.

The charge follows, the discovery earlier this month of a ninth set of remains buried at the house. None of the bodies, so far unearthed has been formally identified.

Clinton aide called before Whitewater grand jury

WASHINGTON (R) — Another top aide to President Bill Clinton was called to appear before a federal grand jury probing the Whitewater affair as two other senior White House aides said they told grand jurors there was no illegal or unethical White House conduct in Whitewater.

A few blocks from the federal courthouse, the Senate neared an end to bitter partisan battles over Whitewater as it voted unanimously to conduct hearings on the affair though it left the crucial question of the hearings' timing to the chamber's Democratic and Republican leaders.

Close Clinton adviser George Stephanopoulos became the seventh White House staff member to be subpoenaed to testify before a grand jury on the Whitewater case.

A White House statement said Mr. Stephanopoulos' attorney had received the subpoena issued by independent counsel Robert Fiske. "I welcome the opportunity to give Mr. Fiske the facts," Mr. Stephanopoulos said, according to the statement.

The White House did not say why Mr. Stephanopoulos, 33, had been ordered to testify.

But Mr. Fiske is probing all aspects of a tangled controversy including the Clintons' involvement in a money-losing land venture known as Whitewater when he was Arkansas governor the failure

of the Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan, whose head, James McDougal, was a partner in Whitewater and the suicide last summer of White House aide Vincent Foster.

White House Counsel Bernard Nussbaum, whose resignation over the affair takes effect next month, was the first of two aides to appear Thursday before the grand jury.

He testified for more than four hours and later said he had answered every question. He was "delighted to cooperate," he told reporters adding: "We have nothing to be ashamed of."

Mr. Nussbaum said that he and everyone in the White House counsel's office had behaved "ethically and legally."

Following Mr. Nussbaum into the grand jury room was White House Deputy Chief of Staff Harold Ickes.

After more than 2½ hours of testimony, Mr. Ickes said it will become clear that there has been "no unethical conduct or wrongdoing" once the investigation has been completed.

The grand jury is examining whether White House and Treasury Department meetings involving Mr. Nussbaum, Mr. Ickes and federal regulators might have interfered with a government investigation of Madison Guaranty activities that could have benefited Bill and Hillary Rodham Clinton.

In the Senate, the call for

Whitewater hearings was drafted in daylong negotiations between Democratic leader George Mitchell and Republican leader Bob Dole.

The non-binding resolution, attached as an amendment to an unrelated bill by a 98-0 vote, stated that the two Senate leaders "should meet and determine the appropriate timetable, procedures and forum for appropriate congressional oversight."

It said hearing could cover "all matters related to Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan Association, Whitewater Development Corporation and Capital Management Services Inc."

But it said the hearings "should be structured and sequenced" so as not to interfere with Mr. Fiske's investigation.

It also said that none of the witnesses called to testify should be given immunity over Mr. Fiske's objections.

Mr. Fiske has opposed any congressional involvement, saying it could compromise his own investigation.

Mr. Clinton said Whitewater hearings in Congress would be a waste of money.

But he told reporters that a decision on hearings, which had been eagerly sought by congressional Republicans, was not up to him but to Congress as a co-equal branch of government.

Meanwhile, the New York

Times reported that first lady Hillary Clinton made a big profit in the commodities market with the help of a fellow lawyer who represented one of Arkansas' most powerful companies.

A report in Friday's editions of the newspaper said Mrs. Clinton made about \$100,000 in one year in the normally risky commodities market with the advice and help of James Blair, a Clinton confidante and powerful Arkansas lawyer.

Mrs. Clinton's investments in the market began just a few weeks before her husband was first elected Arkansas governor in 1978, according to the report. At the time, Mr. Blair was the top lawyer for Tyson Foods Inc. of Springdale, Arkansas, the nation's biggest poultry company.

Tyson benefited from a variety of state actions during Mr. Clinton's tenure, as attorney general of Arkansas and later as governor, including a \$9 million in government loans, the placement of company executives on state boards and favourable decisions on environmental issues, the report says.

The paper quoted Mr. Blair, in telephone interviews, as confirming that he encouraged Mrs. Clinton to invest in the commodities market, especially in cattle futures, and used his own skills to help guide her through a series of lucrative trades.

After pleading guilty, Harding must now pick up the pieces

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Her competitive skating career is finished, she reportedly is nearly broke and, by her own admission, her life is a mess.

Yet, there was Tonya Harding on the ice again Thursday, cheerfully practicing and playing with youngsters, less than 24 hours after pleading guilty to conspiring to hinder prosecution in the attack on Nancy Kerrigan.

"If I want to skate, I'll skate," she said. "It's my life, all right."

As part of a plea bargain, Harding resigned from the U.S. Figure Skating Association, effectively ending her competitive career.

Harding was grumpy when she showed up at the suburban shopping mall Thursday, telling reporters to "quit bugging me" as she walked to the rink.

But as soon as she put on her skates, her spirits began to improve.

She practiced a few jumps, crashing to the wall once and hurting her right knee slightly, but joking as she was helped up by training partner Angela Meduna.

When the practice session ended, Harding stayed on the ice, playfully skating with one of her friends from the special Olympics and holding up a young boy as he tentatively

skated around the rink.

Harding said Thursday she'd love to coach, but on the surface, her future looks bleak.

As part of her plea, she must pay a \$100,000 fine, contribute \$50,000 to the special Olympics and pay Multnomah county \$10,000 to cover some prosecution costs.

A source close to the case said she has enough money to meet those requirements, but the payments will leave her "tapped out."

Harding signed a deal with the syndicated magazine TV show "Inside Edition" that reportedly pays her between \$300,000 and \$500,000. But that money apparently will be gone after she makes her court ordered payments.

At 23, Harding faces few prospects for making money on the ice. She was to have been on a plane to Japan Thursday for next week's world figure skating championships. But her resignation from the figure skating association means she no longer is a part of the U.S. team.

Without her USFSA membership, she also can't compete in either of the two lucrative pro-AM competitions. She's free to participate in some ice shows. But promoters might shy away from her because of the taint of the Kerrigan affair.

Sonics become first NBA team to clinch playoff berth

MINNEAPOLIS, Minnesota (R) — The Seattle SuperSonics became the first NBA team to clinch a playoff spot and Nate McMillan became their all-time steals leader late Thursday when they beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 107-92.

Shawn Kemp had 21 points and 14 rebounds and Gary Payton added 19 points, including six during a 10-0 fourth-quarter run, to help Seattle bounce back from an 89-87 home loss to woeful Detroit Tuesday and improve to league-best 46-16.

Kendall Gill also had 19 points, while Sam Perkins had 16 and Detlef Schrempf 14 for the Sonics.

Kemp made 11-of-13 free throws and Payton connected on 9-of-10 as Seattle hit 40-of-43 from the foul line.

McMillan had five steals to run his total to 1,150 as a Sonic, surpassing Fred Brown's 1,149.

The Sonics had 20 steals in the game, five shy of the NBA record.

Rey King scored 17 points, Doug West had 14 Mike Brown tied a career high with 16 rebounds for Minnesota, which lost its 21st game in its last 24 and fell to 17-46 for the season.

Minnesota's Christian Laettner missed his fifth straight game with a groin injury.

The Sonics have beaten the Wolves 12 straight times.

In New York, Patrick Ewing scored 26 points and grabbed 13 rebounds to send the Knicks to a 105-83 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks, their season-high eighth straight win.

The Knicks have not allowed an opponent to score 90 points during the winning streak, tying an NBA record since the inception of the 24-second shot clock in 1954-55. The Knicks tied the eight-straight mark set by the Syracuse Nationals in 1954.

Anthony Mason added 17 points and nine rebounds and Derek Harper chipped in 13 points for New York, which took over sole possession of first place in the Eastern Conference at 44-19, one half game in front of the Atlanta Hawks.

Vin Baker, playing with an

injured left hand, had 25 points and 11 rebounds and Blue Edwards netted 21 points to pace Milwaukee, which suffered its sixth straight defeat and fell to 17-46.

At Golden State, Otis Thorpe had 21 points and a season-high 21 rebounds to lead the Houston Rockets to their third straight victory, 112-99 over the Warriors.

Vernon Maxwell scored a game-high 25 points, 11 of them in the fourth quarter, and added eight assists for the Rockets, who took the lead for good at 20-19, led by 12 at halftime and never led by less than eight points the rest of the way.

Hakeem Olajuwon had 19 points and 14 rebounds while Robert Horry had 15 points and 10 rebounds for Houston, which out rebounded Golden State 59-44.

Chris Mullin led Golden State with 22 points, Latrell Sprewell added 21 and Chris Webber had 17 points and eight rebounds.

In Miami, Rony Seikaly scored 28 points and Glen Rice added 24 to lift the Heat to a 115-98 rout of the Dallas Mavericks, who lost their 10th straight for their third double-digit losing streak of the season.

Seikaly also grabbed 14 rebounds and Brian Shaw added 11 points and 11 assists for the Heat (36-27), who have won 12 of their last 14 games.

Jim Jackson led Dallas with 25 points, eight rebounds and six assists. Tim Legler added 17 points.

Dallas (8-55) also has had losing streaks of 20 and 16 games this season.

In Los Angeles, Bryant Stith sank four free throws in the final 30 seconds to lift the Denver Nuggets to a 102-99 victory over the Clippers.

Dikembe Mutombo and Mahmoud Abdul Rauf scored 21 points apiece for the Nuggets, who climbed back to the .500 mark (31-31).

Agassi beats Edberg; Graf to face Zvereva in Lipton final

KEY BISCAYNE, Florida (R)

Andre Agassi proved his comeback is for real with a solid win over Stefan Edberg at the \$3.3 million Lipton Championships Thursday while for Steffi Graf, there hasn't been any doubt for quite a while that she is for real.

Agassi, recovered from recent wrist surgery, pounded out a 7-6 6-2 quarter-final victory over the second-seeded Swede.

In a women's semifinal, Graf beat American Lindsay Davenport 6-0 7-6 for her record-breaking 27th consecutive straight-sets win.

In the final, her path to a third Lipton singles title is blocked by someone she has beaten 13 times, ninth-seeded Natalia Zvereva of Belarus.

Agassi, ranked 31st, will play 46th-ranked Australian Patrick Rafter, the only unseeded player left in the tournament, in one side of the men's semifinals while top seed Pete Sampras faces fourth seed and fellow American Jim Courier in the other.

Agassi said he was amazed at his rapid return from injury.

"Oh my goodness. I never would have believed that I could come back this quick. This strong," said Agassi, who already beat Boris Becker earlier in the tournament.

"I'm a man on a mission. My goal is to take my career to where it's never been before," added Agassi.

Edberg offered Agassi a big opening by blowing four consecutive set points in the tie-break.

Edberg, who admitted to feeling sluggish, led 6-2 in the crucial tie-break before falling apart, as Agassi won seven of the next eight points to take the breaker 9-7.

"I did give away the tie-breaker," Edberg said. "I played a few sloppy points."

Earlier, Graf, the women's top seed, fought off two set points by Davenport, the seventh seed, as the American stretched her to a tiebreak for the first time in 36 matches.

But Graf kept her perfect record for straight sets.

Sideline superstar Monica Seles set the previous mark of 26 consecutive straight-set wins in 1990, which Graf equaled

with her quarter-final win over Kimiko Date of Japan.

"I'm not worried about losing a set," said Graf, who seemed blasé about her remarkable accomplishment.

Zvereva defeated Brenda Schultz of the Netherlands 6-0 6-4 in a 66-minute semifinal after winning the first eight games of the match. It was Zvereva's fifth straight victory over Schultz, who won only 13 points in the first set.

As in previous meetings, Zvereva nullified Schultz's topspin and hard first serve with low slice and clever angles.

"I've just got to be up for this game and to do my best," said Zvereva of her coming final with Graf. "Everybody's beatable. I can say that. But she's tough to beat right now."

Rafter came close to elimination in his quarter-final against unseeded American Jim Grabb, but prevailed 1-6 4-6 6-1. Grabb sprained his right ankle midway through the second set, losing both mobility and confidence and Rafter controlled the match after that.

The Fellow wins Cheltenham Gold Cup

CHELTENHAM, England (R) — The Fellow finally became the first French-trained winner of the Cheltenham Gold Cup Thursday, winning the prestigious prize at the fourth attempt in a pulsating finish with favourite Jodami.

Trainer Francois Doumen could not hide his joy as the Fellow, twice beaten by a short head in the Cheltenham Gold Cup, held off last year's winner by a length-and-a-half.

"At last this is a great horse and he deserved to win more than anybody else," said Doumen.

"We've been here four years already, which is something, but this is his great reward. Ridden by regular partner, Polish-born Adam Kondrat,

the Fellow, a 7-1 chance, battled up the Cheltenham hill to hold off Jodami, the 6-4 favourite ridden by Mark Dwyer. It was a three-way battle from two out between Young Hustler, Jodami with the Fellow sandwiched between them. The Fellow, who had not scored in five previous efforts this season, jumped the last well and touched down in

front and, hard though Jodami battled, there was no pulling him back. Young Hustler, a 20-1 shot ridden by Carl Llewellyn, finished third of the 15 runners. Jodami's trainer Peter Beaumont said: "He just didn't meet the last. If he'd pinged it, it might have made a difference but I am not saying that cost him the race. It's the Whitbread next or nothing."

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & YANNAH HIRSCH
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THE CANADIAN COUNT

North-South vulnerable. West deals.

NORTH
A 6 4
K 5 3
A 8
Q J 10 9 4

WEST EAST
J 10 9 8 2 5 3
A Q 2 J 7 6 4
9 8 4 10 7 6 5 2
A K 8 2

SOUTH
K Q 7
10 9 8
K Q J
7 6 5 3

The bidding:
West North East South
Pass 1 NT Pass 2 NT
Pass 3 NT Pass Pass

Opening lead: Jack of ♠.
In yesterday's column we featured one aspect of counting. By playing out as many winners as possible, a picture of the distribution emerged which allowed declarer to take the percentage line when faced with a two-way finesse. Today, counting points was the key factor in bringing home the bacon.

We are not sure we would have found a takeout double with the North hand after West opened one.

spade. However, North was Canadian star Eric Murray, who has a reputation for somewhat creative acts at the card table. As a result, South, the late Doug Drury, became declarer at a reasonable three-no-trump contract.

West led the jack of spades, won in the closed hand. Since there was no way for declarer to come to nine tricks without clubs, that suit was started immediately. In with the king of clubs, West took time to study the situation. The defenders needed tricks fast and almost all the high cards were accounted for by West, North and South. The most

East could hold was a stray jack or so, and unless it was in hearts there was no hope. So West found the brilliant shift to the queen of hearts.

Unfortunately, declarer also had worked out that East was virtually broke. Dismissing a chance to ensure a heart trick by covering, East ducked. West countered by continuing with the two of hearts. South was having none of it. With the ace of hearts marked with West, declarer shot up with dummy's king and knocked out the ace of clubs. There was no way the defenders could get more than two heart tricks and two clubs.

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3. CAN USE WORDPROCESSOR.
4. SHOULD BE READY TO WORK FULL TIME.
5. UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE GRADUATE IS PREFERABLE.
6. KNOWLEDGE OF COMPUTER IS AN ASSET.

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	PHILADELPHIA		PLAZA		CONCORD		AMMOUN THEATRE		Nabil Al Mashini Theatre		AHLAN THEATRE	
	Jean-Claude Van Damme HARD TARGET Shows: 11:00, 1:00, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30		Adel Emam in TERRORIST Shows: 10:00, 12:30, 3:00, 5:00, 6:45, 8:30, 10:30		CONCORD '1' Sylvester Stallone — in Demolition Man Shows: 12:30, 3:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORD '2' Women of Desire Shows: 5:30, 7:00, 8:45, 10:30 Special film for children Dennis The Menace Shows: 11:30 a.m., 1:30, 3:00 p.m.		Opening Soon A political comedy Forbidden X Forbidden		presents a play entitled: Al Iim Nuron A popular political comedy Actors: Abeer Issa, Daoud Jalajel, Hassan Al Shaer, Fuad Shomali in addition to other comedians Every night at 8:15 Tickets are sold all day Coming soon: The next play		The theatre will be closed for vacation	

U.S. urges Russia to scrap its chemical arms following deal with NATO

MOSCOW (Agencies) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry urged Russia on Friday to go ahead with the destruction of its chemical and biological weapons and offered American expertise in the difficult task.

Winding up a two-day visit, Mr. Perry praised Russia's agreement to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) "Partnership for Peace" with Eastern European and former Soviet states.

"It will be more successful and meaningful with Russia joining," he said of Moscow's promise on Thursday that it will be ready this month to sign up to the East-West programme of peacekeeping and other joint efforts.

Mr. Perry and Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin told reporters after a meeting that they discussed Moscow's stockpile of chemical and biological arms and agreements between the two countries to destroy the weapons.

The United States is in the process of destroying its own chemical and biological agents under stringent controls. The two men said the issue of Russian weapons would be taken up further at a meeting expected to take place in Washington in June.

"I raised to the prime minister the importance we attach to getting rid of the chemical weapons and the biological weapons and having satisfactory means of confirming that that has been done," Mr. Perry told reporters later.

"I also offered him assistance in the area of getting those facilities closed down and cleaned up," he said. "He was thankful for that offer of assistance."

Mr. Perry is on a week-long trip during which he will also visit Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Belarus to improve bilateral ties and encourage democratic and market reforms.

He said Washington was

already helping Russia with money and advice on how to destroy its chemical weapons and was ready to do the same with biological arms.

Mr. Perry, travelling behind the former iron curtain for the first time since he took office in February, expressed delight at the decision by Europe's most powerful military force to join NATO's new Partnership for Peace plan.

"Russia is a great power, a nuclear power. They will play a very special role in the partnership for peace," he told reporters at a brief joint press conference with Mr. Chernomyrdin.

"This would be a major event in NATO," Perry said in response to questions.

"We deliberately will not put any conditions (on membership). I don't think this represents backing down," Mr. Chernomyrdin said, referring to Russia's previous position that it must be given special status in the partnership.

At least 12 other countries have already signed up to the programme, under which Eastern European and former Soviet states will forge closer military ties with NATO countries but would not be full members of the alliance.

The allies have been anxiously courting Russia, which had criticised the partnership and warned NATO against giving other former Soviet states full membership.

Before flying to the Kazakh capital Alma-Ata later on Friday, Mr. Perry signed an agreement promising another \$50 million in "defence conversion" funds from Washington to help change the vast Soviet arms industry to commercial production and retrain its workers.

The money is part of more than \$1 billion which the United States has pledged to Russia and other former Soviet states for defence conversion, the destruction of nuclear arms

and building housing for tens of thousands of former Russian troops.

In a surprise announcement following an hour long meeting, with Perry, Pavel Grachev, Russia's defence minister, said final details of the proposal to join NATO are being worked out.

"At the end of this month we will be ready," General Grachev said.

The question of how such an alliance might work took on concrete form in the meeting as Mr. Perry and Gen. Grachev discussed Russian participation in the peacekeeping effort in Bosnia.

"We agreed to work together as equal partners with the Bosnians, the Croats, and the Muslims to work towards peace," Mr. Perry said.

In the State Duma, the more powerful of the two legislative branches, the partnership got a less favourable review in a daylong hearing of committee leaders Thursday.

"We have botched it," said Vladimir Petrovich Lukin, chairman of the committee for international affairs. "It can only be described as dictating conditions to others."

Mr. Lukin, who is considered a Russian reformer, said that if partnership is a compromise, "it reminds me of a compromise of a rapist" who offers his victim the choice between cooperation and violence.

During the debate, one of Gen. Grachev's deputies, Pavel Zolotarev, acknowledged Russia occupies a "unfavourable geopolitical environment," but risks isolation if it spurns the partnership.

"We shall thus be playing a role of outside observer of the political process in Europe, whose opinion would be given less and less heed," Mr. Zolotarev said. As a member of the partnership, he said, Russia would have "greater freedom of movement in promoting national interests."



Palestinian children playing with toy guns push a handicapped man on a street in Gaza City (AFP photo)

Palestinians in occupied lands oppose return to talks

By Mariam M. Shahin
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM

As the U.N. Security Council prepared to vote on a resolution condemning the Feb. 25 massacre in Hebron by a Jewish settler, most Palestinians living under Israeli occupation said they strongly opposed the return of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to autonomy talks with Israel.

Many Fatah loyalists and opposition groups alike said the PLO should not return to the negotiating table before major and practical steps are taken by the occupation authorities to ensure increased security of the Palestinian population, speed up the autonomy process and curb restrictions on movement of people inside the occupied territories and East Jerusalem.

A leading member of the Palestinian negotiating team said: "These are not 'demands' anymore. They are necessities to keep the people believing and supporting the peace process. The Israelis and Americans must realise that."

"The peace process, as it stood after the (Feb. 9) Cairo agreement, was like an aged man waiting to die. After Hebron that man died. The Israelis must now realise that giving us bread crumbs instead of slices of bread to eventually make a loaf unacceptable. The approach will backfire and then both Israel and the PLO will suffer dearly," said the Palestinian negotiator, predicting Hamas-led violence against both Israel and pro-peace talks Palestinians.

"On the ground, here in the occupied territories, many things are not only standing still since Oslo but moving backwards and we, the Palestinians, should not agree to return to talks that have become a smokescreen for Israeli designs to further usurp our lands and curtail the declaration of principles," said Mr. Khatib.

Mr. Khatib, who also heads the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre (JMCC), says that the continued expansion of settlements in the occupied territories is as much an issue that is "immediate" as security of the population.

"To address the security issue alone is not comprehensive enough. The security issue should not be used as a means to sideline the other equally important issues," he added.

Even after Eid Al Fitr, however, all political groupings in the occupied territories continued to make protests against the massacre the focus of their anti-occupation activities. Demonstrations in Ramallah and Bir Zeit drew several thousand students on Thursday.

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(Continued on page 3)

Jane's report: Iran near brink of collapse

LONDON (AP) — Iran appears near the brink of collapse as a viable sovereign state and could become engulfed in civil unrest, according to Jane's intelligence review.

"At no point since the early days of the revolution has the political, economic and social condition of Iran been so fragile," wrote James Wylie of the University of Aberdeen, a security specialist who focuses on the Middle East.

Since Iran's Muslim fundamentalist government took power in a 1979 revolution, then fought a brutal eight-year war with Iraq, there has been constant speculation about its stability.

While other Middle East experts agreed that a political crisis was brewing, they were divided about whether civil strife is possible and virtually all ruled out a civil war. One dismissed the prediction of Iran's collapse as "a lot of wishful thinking" by the West.

In an article entitled "Iran — the edge of the precipice," which was made available Friday to the Associated Press, Mr. Wylie said the desperate state of the economy and political factionalism were putting "unprecedented strains" on the fabric of the country.

"Iran is in a parlous condition and there is a prospect of civil collapse," he wrote.

Mr. Wylie said President Hashemi Rafsanjani's economic liberalisation programme has failed to rescue the economy. Oil prices are about half the \$30 a barrel the government had banked on, the Iranian rial has been devalued 25 per cent, and the government is reportedly up to \$10 billion behind on debt repayment.

There is evidence of "active discontent" among Iranians who are suffering real deprivation, he said, citing sporadic riots since 1992. The most recent riot occurred last month in the southeastern city of Zاهدان, reportedly between Iran's Shiite Muslim majority and Sunni Muslim minority.

"If there is going to be a civil war, it's going to be between the modernisers, in Iranian terms the liberals who support Rafsanjani, and the conservative right" led by Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Mr. Wylie said.

Clinton stars in anti-violence ads

WASHINGTON (AP) — Bill Clinton the president and Bill Clinton the parent unveiled a series of public service announcements for radio and TV in which he urges Americans to do more to fight violent crime. But he did not take a stand on whether television should cut back on violence.

"As a parent, I want this violence to stop. As your president, I'm committed to ending it," Mr. Clinton says in the ads. One TV spot begins with 14-year-old Alicia Brown, a Washington, D.C., eighth-grader who tells viewers that to tragedy when her friend was shot to death. Mr. Clinton, standing with his hands on her shoulders, tells viewers: "Unfortunately, Alicia's story is all too common... We must give Alicia, and all our children, back their childhood." Five friends of Alicia had been killed at the time of the filming. She was leaving Thursday's announcement early to attend a funeral for a sixth friend.

"Life since the age of 12," the youngster said at Thursday's unveiling ceremony. "I know how important it is for me to be here, because last week my classmate was shot down... We need to stop seeing our friends killed. This isn't make believe. This is real!" Mr. Clinton, whose daughter Chelsea is 14, spoke after Alicia and told a crowd to the old executive office building: "I can tell you, as the father of a teenager, every teenager in the country talks about this issue at home at night, discusses it over the dinner table, is concerned about it, worries about whether they're going to have friends that are going to fall victim to crime."

Akihito to visit U.S. in June

TOKYO (R) — Japan announced Friday that Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko would visit the United States in June but there was no official word on reports Pearl Harbour would be on the itinerary. The emperor's two-week visit would begin on June 10 but details had not been finalised, the Foreign Ministry said. "I am certain that his trip will strengthen our traditional wide-ranging friendship with the United States," Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa said in a statement. "I find this a joyous event and I am sure our fellow citizens agree." It will be the first imperial trip to the United States since Emperor Hirohito, Japan's monarch during World War II, went there in 1975. The daily Yomiuri Shimbun reported Monday that Emperor Akihito, Emperor Hirohito's son, would take the highly symbolic step of visiting the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbour — target of the Japanese surprise attack on Dec. 7, 1941 which ignited the Pacific War.

Greece announces new law on entertainment

ATHENS (AP) — Athens had an early night Wednesday as a new law restricting club hours and the entry of minors went into effect. The law imposed a 2:00 a.m. closing time on thousands of clubs, bars and nightclubs throughout the country and restricts people under 17 from entering without a parent or guardian. The new hours also apply to restaurants. It replaces previous legislation that allowed places of entertainment to set their own hours. Although the law restricts entry to minors it does not impose a drinking age. In Greece people of all ages are allowed to purchase alcohol. Public Order Minister Stelios Papathemelis said he drafted the law to cut down on crime and to increase worker productivity. "I think people should have fun during normal hours. I'm leaving at two," Mr. Papathemelis, a regular churchgoer, told reporters while having fun at a nightclub early Thursday. Police reported 36 infractions of the law early Thursday and one case of an unescorted minor in the Athens area. Athens and Salonic, Greece's second largest city, were known to have three rush hours before the new law went into effect. The early and afternoon rush hours plus third rush after clubs close before dawn. The law has drawn negative reaction mostly from nightclub owners. The owners claim the law is unconstitutional and said they will fight it in the courts.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bosphorus Strait opens to traffic

ISTANBUL (AP) — The Bosphorus Strait reopened to traffic Friday when the crude oil aboard a stricken tanker stopped burning, five days after the vessel collided with a freighter. "The strait is open to traffic as of 9 a.m. (0600 GMT) and the fire is totally extinguished," Deputy Governor Ruhi Peker said. Some 200 vessels from various nations have been waiting at both sides of the waterway to get through. The Bosphorus Strait links Istanbul's European and Asian coasts and is a major shipping route. Sunday's accident occurred after the freighter Ship Broker, which was sailing empty towards the Black Sea, collided with the oil tanker Nassia, which was carrying 51,000 tonnes of crude oil from Russia to Italy. Both were registered as Greek-Cypriot vessels.

U.S. sees no threats to Cairo meeting

BONN (R) — A senior U.S. counter-terrorism official said on Friday he was confident Egypt could protect a major U.N. conference in Cairo in September from being targeted by militants. State Department Counsellor Tim Wirth brushed off news reports that the U.N. conference on population and development would be at risk from bombings and shootings aimed at foreign tourists in Egypt. Mr. Wirth said the United States was helping President Hosni Mubarak's government to crack down on extremists. "We've worked very, very closely with Egyptian security. We've had our best teams working with the Egyptians on this issue," Mr. Wirth, stopping over in Bonn after meeting Egyptian authorities in Cairo, told reporters.

Swedish referendum on EU on Nov. 13

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Swedes will decide next fall whether their country should join the European Union (EU). Prime Minister Carl Bildt said Friday a referendum on Swedish membership in the giant trading bloc has been set for Nov. 13. Mr. Bildt announced the date following a meeting with leaders of the other parties in his centre-right coalition government. Sweden concluded its membership negotiations with the EU on March 1, together with Finland and Austria. Norway reached an agreement last Wednesday.

Somalis capture Filipino fishermen

MANILA (R) — Somali gunmen have captured 23 Filipino fishermen from a Taiwanese trawler illegally fishing in Somali waters and Manila is checking reports the Somalis have threatened to kill them, officials said here on Friday. Foreign Secretary Roberto Romulo said the 23 were arrested last month off northeastern Somalia and Filipino diplomats were in touch with Somali officials and U.N. representatives in the area to seek their release. Manila newspapers, quoting diplomatic reports, said the Somalis had threatened to kill the Filipinos if an unspecified ransom was not paid. Sixteen Pakistanis previously captured by Somali militia were released after Pakistani officials paid \$7,000 ransom for each, the newspapers said.

Rochelle Manning dies in prison

TEL AVIV (AP) — Rochelle Manning, an American immigrant who was awaiting extradition to the U.S. in connection with a murder trial, died Friday in an Israeli prison, a spokesman said. Manning, 54, who immigrated in 1986 and settled in the Kiryat Arba settlement near Hebron, apparently suffered a heart attack. Her death was confirmed by a Ben-Ami spokesman. She fell ill and collapsed Friday morning about an hour after morning roll call at the Neve Tirza women's prison near Tel Aviv, following morning prayers and a drink. Ben-Ami said. A prison doctor tried for 40 minutes to revive her. Mr. Ben-Ami said there was "no suspicion of suicide," but that a routine probe of Mrs. Manning's death was underway. The supreme court had cleared the way for her extradition, ruling against her appeal of the order on March 2.

Shamseddin to replace missing Sadr

BEIRUT (AP) — Sheikh Mohammad Mehdi Shamseddin, a staunch advocate of Muslim-Christian coexistence, was elected Friday spiritual leader of Lebanon's increasingly powerful Shiite Muslims.

Sheikh Shamseddin, 61, was chosen to lead Lebanon's largest sect in a unanimous vote by the 46 members of the Higher Shiite Council's legislative and executive branches. The council runs the day-to-day religious affairs of the 1.2 million Shiite and sets guidelines for the community's representatives in the government and parliament.

Sheikh Shamseddin replaced Imam Musa Sadr, a charismatic Shiite leader who headed the council from 1969 until he went missing in Libya in September 1978. Sadr also was the founder of the Amal (hope) movement, which fielded the main Shiite militia during Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war.

For many years, Sadr's followers believed their leader was alive and imprisoned in Libya. Libya has denied that, claiming he left for Italy after a visit.

Sadr's disappearance triggered several Shiite admission that Sadr was probably dead.

In an acceptance speech after the vote, Sheikh Shamseddin called on Christians and Muslims to close ranks to block any attempt to rekindle the civil war.

He said Lebanon can survive only by the coexistence of its various religions.

Even during the darkest days of the civil war, Sheikh Shamseddin preached tolerance. He repeatedly called for the unconditional release of Western hostages kidnapped by pro-Iranian extremists.

But neither Sheikh Shamseddin nor the council have any control over the fundamentalists who owe allegiance to the religious hierarchy in Iran.

Sheikh Shamseddin, however, extended support for guerrillas allied in an armed campaign to dislodge Israeli troops from a border enclave they occupy in South Lebanon.

"Confronting the (Israeli) occupation is a right and duty for the Lebanese," he said.

Suspects held in Jounieh church blast

BEIRUT (Agencies) — A number of suspects have been arrested in connection with a church bombing that killed 10 worshippers three weeks ago and revived memories of the country's civil war terror.

A police statement said Friday that the suspects had been turned over to examining Magistrate Joseph Freiha and charged in connection with the Feb. 27 bombing, in which 60 people were wounded.

The statement did not give the names, affiliation or number of those in custody. But it said Mr. Freiha had issued arrest warrants for a number of others implicated in the blast, which ripped through the Maronite Catholic church of Notre Dame de la Délivrance during Sunday sacrament.

The names and numbers of the fugitive also were withheld.

The police statement was the first official confirmation of arrests made in a widespread army crackdown, mounted after the bombings.

The explosion triggered a rash of bombing scares at schools, churches, mosques and cinemas in Beirut and its suburbs.

It also jolted government efforts to dispel the terrorist image Beirut acquired during

the 1975-1990 civil war and encourage foreign investment to rebuild Lebanon.

The latest suspects were among 127 arrested earlier in connection with the church bombing.

In Lebanon suspects are detained as part of an investigation without arrest warrants. After interrogation and further investigation by a judge, the judge then either orders their release or issues an arrest warrant to pave the way for putting them on trial.

The judiciary sources said some of the detained suspects have confessed to Judge Freiha that they took part in the bombing of the church near the port of Jounieh.

The sources gave no further details, saying the "secret" investigation was continuing.

The Lebanese army and police have launched a dragnet in the wake of the church bombing, which was followed by a series of small bombings or attempted bombings in several Christian areas.

The government has vowed to enforce tight security measures throughout the country until "all terror and sabotage networks are uncovered."

The bombing campaign has caused alarm in Lebanon, particularly among the influential Christian minority.

It has spread panic among citizens and police receive daily dozens of calls reporting "suspicious objects" in various streets.

Police ban movie

Authorities in the northern city of Tripoli have banned an Egyptian movie mocking Muslim fundamentalists after a plea from a Sunni Muslim leader.

Police on Sunday raided the Rivoli theatre, security sources said, to prevent the debut screening of "The Terrorist," starring the highly popular Egyptian actor Adel Imam.

But cinemas elsewhere in the country continued showing the film about an extremist who sets fire to video shops and attacks a jewelry store and tourist buses, deeming all of society to be against Islamic teachings.

After one attack, he steals the car of a philosophy professor to escape. He crashes into another vehicle of a young woman who takes him home and treats his injuries, gradually causing him to reconsider his hardline views.

A fist fight broke out in the

audience at the Rivoli as the police stormed the theatre, according to the security sources. No serious injuries were reported.

They said the crackdown came in response to a call for a ban on the movie by Sheikh Saeed Shaaban, leader of the Sunni Muslim fundamentalist group Al Tawheed.

Sheikh Shaaban maintained the film is upsetting to Muslims, the sources said.

Mr. Imam, the actor, has taken a strong stand against Muslim fundamentalists, especially their opinion that mainstream cinema and arts violate Islamic law.

Three years ago, he insisted on performing one of his plays in Assiut, an extremist stronghold in Egypt, despite threats to his life.

During filming of "The Terrorist," police protection was provided for key actors. According to most Egyptian critics, the film is the harshest ever made on the subject of religious extremism.

"The Terrorist" opened in Lebanon, Egypt and other Arab countries on Sunday.

Tripoli, Lebanon's second largest city with a predominantly Sunni population of 800,000 is 80 kilometres north of Beirut.

Cholera epidemic strikes Somalia

By Reid G. Miller
The Associated Press

MOGADISHU — An outbreak of cholera first noticed in Somalia last month has become an epidemic, with more than 100 people already dead and the toll growing daily.

Christian Clark, a spokesman for the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), expressed concern Wednesday that efforts to control the epidemic could be jeopardised by the withdrawal of Western military forces.

The United States, Germany, Italy, France and several other nations are removing their troops from the U.N. peacekeeping force in Somalia by the end of March.

With them are going helicopters and airplanes that for more than a year have often been put at the disposal of U.N. and private aid agencies,

allowing them access to parts of the country unreachable overland.

"It's a real worry," Mr. Clark said. "Our ability to get around could be severely restricted."

Cholera was first detected in the northern port of Bosaso a little more than a month ago. Since then, it has spread 1,600 kilometres south to Kismayo and to a number of points in between.

In Bosaso, 664 people have contracted the disease and at least 22 have died, Mr. Clark said. He said there were unconfirmed reports of 236 cases and 42 deaths in Belet Huen, near the Ethiopian border in central Somalia.

In Kismayo, 400 kilometres south of Mogadishu on the Indian Ocean, 261 cases have been confirmed the past four days, Mr. Clark said. Mogadishu itself has reported 431, with an unconfirmed number

of deaths. Mr. Clark said at least 100 people had died of the disease and the death toll could rise rapidly as information from remote areas becomes available.

Cholera is a viral disease most commonly contracted by drinking contaminated water. Its symptoms include high fever, vomiting and diarrhoea that leave its victims critically dehydrated.

Diagnosed and properly treated early, it is not usually fatal. But in places like Somalia, with little sanitation and severe shortages of medical personnel, medicine and hospitals, it can be a ravaging killer.

When American troops first came to Somalia in December 1992 to help break a deadly famine then scouring the country, they were given a Defence Department pam-

phlet that described Somalia as perhaps the unhealthiest country on earth.

More than 1,000 contaminated wells already have been chlorinated across the country and tens of thousands of leaflets distributed advising Somalis on how to avoid the disease.

Bill Bergquist, a U.N. official heading the anti-cholera campaign, acknowledged complaints from some Somali health workers that the world body may have been slow to respond to the outbreak.

"I think we probably were a little slow to react initially, but I think we've got our act together now and I think we'll do a better job in the future," Mr. Bergquist said.

The U.N. mission in Somalia and the World Health Organisation, UNICEF, the International Red Cross and other aid groups have mobilised to combat the disease, Mr. Bergquist said.